LEONIDAS:

A

POEM.

———Θανεῖν δ' ὅ τ' ἴσιν ἀνάγκα
Τί κε τις ἀνώνυμον γῆρας ἔν σκότῳ
Καθήμενος ἕψοι ματαν, ἁπάντων
Καλῶν ἄμμορος;

PIND. OLYMP. OD. 1.



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M.DCC.XXXVII.

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THE PREFACE.

TO illuſtrate the following POEM, to vindicate the ſubject from the cenſure of improbability, and to ſhew by the concurring evidence of the beſt hiſtorians, that ſuch diſintereſted public virtue did once exiſt, I have thought, it would not be improper to prefix the ſubſequent narration.

WHILE Darius, the father of Xerxes, was yet on the throne of Perſia, Cleomenes and Demaratus were kings in Lacedæmon, both deſcended from Hercules. Demaratus was unfortunately expos'd by an uncertain rumour, which render'd his legitimacy ſuſpected, to the malice and treachery of his colleague, who had conceiv'd a perſonal reſentment againſt him; for Cleomenes taking advantage of this report, perſuaded the Spartans to examine into the Birth of Demaratus, and refer the difficulty to the oracle of Delphi; and was aſſiſted in his perfidious deſigns by a near relation of Demaratus, nam'd Leotychides, who aſpir'd to ſucceed him in his dignity. Cleomenes found means to corrupt the Prieſteſs of Delphi, who declar'd Demaratus not legitimate. Thus by the baſe practices of his colleague Cleomenes, and his

kinſman Leotychides, Demaratus was expell'd from his office of king in the commonwealth, after having frequently ſignaliz'd his valour in its ſervice. He went into voluntary baniſhment, and retiring to Aſia was there protected by Darius; while Leotychides ſucceeded to the regal authority in Sparta. Upon the Death of Cleomenes Leonidas was made king, who rul'd in conjunction with this Leotychides, when Xerxes, the ſon of Darius, invaded Greece. The number of Land and naval forces, which accompanied that monarch, together with the ſervants, women, and other uſual attendants on the army of an eaſtern prince, amounted to upwards of five millions, as reported by Herodotus, who wrote within a few years after the event, and publickly recited his hiſtory at the Olympic games. In this general aſſembly not only from Greece itſelf, but from every part of the world, wherever a colony of Grecians was planted, had he greatly exceeded the truth, he muſt certainly have been detected, and cenſur'd by ſome among ſo great a multitude, and ſuch a voluntary falſhood muſt have entirely deſtroy'd that merit and authority, which have procur'd to Herodotus the veneration of all poſterity, with the appellation of the father of hiſtory. On the firſt news of this attempt upon their liberty a convention was immediately held at the Iſthmus, of Corinth, compos'd of deputies from the ſeveral ſtates of Greece, to conſult on proper meaſures for the public ſafety. The Spartans alſo ſent meſſengers to enquire of the oracle at Delphi into the event of the war, who return'd with an anſwer from the prieſteſs of Apollo, that either a king deſcended from Hercules muſt die, or Lacedæmon would be entirely deſtroy'd. Leonidas immediately offer'd to ſacrifice his life for the ſafety of Lacedæmon,

and

and marching to Thermopylæ poſſeſs'd himſelf of that important paſs with three hundred of his countrymen; who with the forces of ſome other cities in the Peloponneſus, together with the Thebans, Theſpians, and the troops of thoſe ſtates, which adjoin'd to Thermopylæ, compos'd an army of near eight thouſand men.

XERXES was now advanc'd as far as Theſſalia; when hearing, that a ſmall body of Grecians was aſſembled at Thermopylæ, with ſome Lacedæmonians at their head, and among the reſt Leonidas, a deſcendant of Hercules, he diſpatch'd a ſingle horſeman before to obſerve their numbers, and diſcover their deſigns. When this horſeman approach'd, he could not take a view of the whole camp, which lay conceal'd behind a rampart formerly rais'd by the Phocians at the entrance of Thermopylæ; ſo that his whole attention was employ'd on thoſe, who were on guard before the wall, and who at that inſtant chanc'd to be the Lacedæmonians. Their manner and geſtures greatly aſtoniſh'd the Perſian; ſome were amuſing themſelves in gymnaſtic exerciſes; others were combing their hair; and all diſcover'd a total diſregard of him, whom they ſuffer'd to depart without moleſtation, and report to Xerxes, what he had ſeen: which appearing to that prince quite ridiculous, he ſent for Demaratus, who was with him in the camp, and requir'd him to explain this ſtrange behaviour of his Countrymen. Demaratus inform'd him, that it was a cuſtom among the Spartans to comb down and adjuſt their hair, when they were determin'd to fight till the laſt extremity. Xerxes notwithſtanding in the confidence of his power ſent ambaſſadors to the Grecians to demand their arms, to bid them diſperſe, and become his friends and allies; which propoſals being receiv'd with

diſdain, he commanded the Medes and Saces to ſeize on the Grecians, and bring them alive into his preſence. Theſe nations immediately attack'd the Grecians, and were ſoon repuls'd with great ſlaughter; freſh troops ſtill ſucceeded, but with no better fortune than the firſt, being oppos'd to an enemy not only ſuperior in valour and reſolution, but who had the advantage of diſcipline, and were furniſh'd with better arms both offenſive and defenſive.

PLUTARCH in his Laconic apothegms reports, that the Perſian king offer'd to inveſt Leonidas with the ſovereignty of all Greece, provided he would join his arms to thoſe of Perſia. This offer was too conſiderable a condeſcenſion to have been made before a tryal of their force, and muſt therefore have been propos'd by Xerxes, after ſuch a ſeries of ill ſucceſs, as might probably have depreſs'd the inſolence of his temper; and it may be eaſily ſuppos'd, that the virtue of Leonidas was proof againſt any temptations of that nature. Whether this be a fact, or not, thus much is certain, that Xerxes was reduc'd to extreme difficulties by this reſolute defence of Thermopylæ; till he was extricated from his diſtreſs by a Malian nam'd Epialtes, who conducted twenty thouſand of the Perſian army into Greece through a paſs, which lay higher up the country among the mountains of Oeta: whereas the paſſage at Thermopylæ was ſituated on the ſea-ſhore between the end of thoſe mountains and the Malian bay. The defence of the upper paſs had been committed to a thouſand Phocians, who upon the firſt ſight of the enemy inconſiderately abandon'd their ſtation, and put themſelves in array upon a neighbouring eminence: but the Perſians wiſely avoided an engagement, and with the utmoſt expedition march'd to Thermopylæ.

mopylæ. Leonidas no ſooner receiv'd information, that the Barbarians had paſs'd the mountains, but he commanded the allies to retreat, reſerving the three hundred Spartans, and four hundred Thebans, whom, as they follow'd him with reluctance at firſt, he now compell'd to ſtay. But the Theſpians, whoſe number amounted to ſeven hundred, would not be perſuaded by Leonidas to forſake him. Their commander was Demophilus, and the moſt eminent amongſt them for his valour was Dithyrambus. Among the Spartans the moſt conſpicuous next to Leonidas was Dieneces, who being told, that the multitude of Perſian arrows would obſcure the ſun, replied, the battle would then be in the ſhade. Two brothers named Alpheus and Maron are alſo recorded for their valour and were Lacedæmonians. Megiſtias a prieſt, by birth an Acarnanian, refus'd to deſert Leonidas, though intreated by him to conſult his ſafety, and retire; but ſent away his only ſon, and remain'd himſelf behind to die with the Lacedæmonians. Among the three hundred Spartans were two call'd Eurytus and Ariſtodemus, who being almoſt blind were diſmiſs'd by Leonidas. Of theſe Ariſtodemus return'd home; but Eurytus waited, till the Perſians deſcended from the hills, and then commanding his ſlave to lead him among the combatants was ſlain with the reſt of his countrymen.

HERODOTUS relates, that Leonidas drew up his men in the broadeſt part of Thermopylæ; where, being ſurrounded by the Perſians, they fell with great numbers of their enemies: but Plutarch, Diodorus Siculus, and others affirm, that the Grecians attack'd the very camp of Xerxes in the night. The action is thus deſcrib'd by Diodorus. "The Grecians having now rejected all "thoughts of ſafety, preferring glory to life, una-

" nimouſly call'd on their general to lead them
" againſt the Perſians, before they could be ap-
" pris'd, that their friends had paſs'd round the
" mountains. Leonidas embrac'd the occaſion,
" which the ready zeal of his ſoldiers afforded,
" and commanded them forthwith to dine, as
" men, who were to ſup in Elyſium. Himſelf in
" conſequence of this command took a repaſt, as
" the means to furniſh ſtrength for a long con-
" tinuance, and to give preſeverance in danger.
" After a ſhort refreſhment the Grecians were
" now prepar'd, and receiv'd orders to aſſail the
" enemies camp, to put all, they met, to the
" ſword, and force a paſſage to the royal pavilion,
" when, form'd into one compact body with Leo-
" nidas himſelf at their head, they march'd againſt
" the Perſians, and enter'd their camp at the dead
" of night. The Barbarians wholly unprepar'd,
" and blindly conjecturing, that their friends were
" defeated, and themſelves attack'd by the united
" power of Greece, hurry together from their
" tents with the utmoſt diſorder and conſterna-
" tion. Many were ſlain by Leonidas and his
" party, but much greater multitudes by their
" own troops, to whom in the midſt of this blind
" confuſion they were not diſtinguiſhable from
" enemies: for as night took away the power of
" diſcerning truly, and the tumult was ſpread
" univerſally over the camp, a prodigious ſlaugh-
" ter muſt naturally enſue. The want of com-
" mand, of a watch-word, and of confidence in
" themſelves reduc'd the Perſians to ſuch a ſtate
" of confuſion, that they deſtroy'd each other
" without diſtinction. Had Xerxes continu'd in
" the royal pavilion, the Grecians without diffi-
" culty might have brought the war to a ſpeedy
" concluſion by his death; but he at the begin-

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" ning of the tumult betook himſelf to flight with
" the utmoſt precipitation; when the Grecians
" ruſhing into the tent, put to the ſword moſt
" of thoſe, who were left behind: then, while
" night laſted, they rang'd through the whole
" camp in diligent ſearch of the tyrant. When
" morning appear'd, the Perſians perceiving the
" true ſtate of things, held the inconſiderable
" number of their enemies in contempt; yet were
" ſo terrified at their valour, that they avoided
" a near engagement; but incloſing the Grecians
" on every ſide ſhower'd their darts and arrows
" upon them at a diſtance, and in the end de-
" ſtroy'd their whole body. Such was the period
" of their lives, who under the conduct of Leo-
" nidas defended the paſs of Thermopylæ. Who
" can refrain from admiring the virtue of theſe
" men, who with one conſent maintaining the
" poſt allotted by their country chearfully re-
" nounc'd their lives for the common ſafety of
" Greece, and eſteem'd a glorious death more
" eligible than to live with diſhonour? Nor is the
" conſternation of the Perſians incredible. Who
" among thoſe Barbarians could have conjectur'd
" ſuch an event? who could have expected, that
" five hundred men would have dar'd to attack a
" million? Wherefore ſhall not all poſterity from
" that day reflect on the virtue of theſe men as
" the object of imitation, who, though the loſs
" of their lives was the neceſſary conſequence of
" their undertaking, were yet unconquer'd in their
" ſpirit; and among all the great names deliver'd
" down to remembrance are the only heroes, who
" obtain'd more glory in their fall than others
" from the brighteſt victories? With Juſtice may
" they be deem'd the preſervers of the Grecian
" liberty, even preferably to thoſe, who were

" conquerors in the battles fought afterwards with " Xerxes; for the memory of their valour, who " fell at Thermopylæ, for ever dejected the Bar- " barians, while the Greeks were fir'd with " emulation to equal ſuch a pitch of magnani- " mity. Upon the whole there never were any " before theſe who attain'd to immortality through " the meer exceſs of virtue; whence the praiſe " of their fortitude has not been recorded by hi- " ſtorians only, but has been celebrated by num- " bers of poets, among others by Simonides the " lyric."

PAUSANIAS in his Laconics conſiders the defence of Thermopylæ, as an action ſuperior to any atchiev'd by their cotemporaries, and to all the exploits of preceding ages. " Never (ſays he) " had Xerxes beheld Greece, or laid in aſhes the " city of Athens, had not his forces under Hy- " darnes been conducted through a path over Oeta, " and by that means incompaſſing the Greeks " overcame and ſlain Leonidas." Nor is it improbable, that Leonidas ſhould have maintain'd his poſt in ſo narrow a paſs, till the whole army of Xerxes had periſh'd by famine. At the ſame time the Perſian navy had been miſerably ſhatter'd by a ſtorm, and worſted in an engagement with the Athenians at Artemiſium.

To conclude, the fall of Leonidas and his brave companions, ſo meritorious to their country, and ſo glorious to themſelves, has obtain'd ſuch an high degree of veneration and applauſe from paſt ages, that few among the antient compilers of hiſtory have been ſilent on this amazing inſtance of magnanimity and zeal for liberty; and many are the epigrams and inſcriptions now extant, ſome on the whole body, others on particulars, who died at Thermopylæ, ſtill preſerving their

their memory in every nation converſant with learning, and at this diſtance of time ſtill rendering their virtue the object of admiration and praiſe.

I SHALL now detain the reader no longer, than to take this public occaſion of expreſſing my ſincere regard for the LORD VISCOUNT COBHAM, and the ſenſe of my obligations for the early honour of his friendſhip. To him I inſcribe the following poem; and herein might I be juſtified, independent of all perſonal motives, from his Lordſhip's public conduct ſo highly diſtinguiſh'd by his diſintereſted zeal, and unſhaken fidelity to his country, not leſs in civil life than in the field: and to whom a poem founded on a character eminent for military glory, and love of liberty is due from the nature of the ſubject.

R. GLOVER.



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LEONIDAS:

BOOK I.

The Argument.

Xerxes king of Perſia having drawn together the whole force of his empire, and paſs'd over the Helleſpont into Thrace with a deſign to conquer Greece; the deputies from the ſeveral ſtates of that country, who had ſome time before aſſembled themſelves at the Iſthmus of Corinth to deliberate on proper meaſures for reſiſting the invader, were no ſooner appris'd of his march into Thrace, than they determin'd without further delay to diſpute his paſſage at the ſtraits of Thermopylæ, the moſt acceſſible part of Greece on the ſide of Thrace and Theſſaly. Alpheus, one of the deputies from Sparta, repairs to that city, and communicates this reſolution to his countrymen; who chanced that day to be aſſembled in expectation of receiving an anſwer from Apollo, to whom they had ſent a meſſenger to conſult about the event of the war. Leotychides, one of their two kings, counſels the people to advance no further, than the Iſthmus of Corinth, which ſeparates the Peloponneſus, where Lacedæmon was ſituated, from the reſt of Greece; but Leonidas, the other king, diſſuades them from it. Agis, the meſſenger, who had been deputed to Delphi, and brother to the queen of Leonidas, returns with the oracle; which denounces ruin to the Lacedæmonians, unleſs one of their kings lays down his life for the publick. Leonidas offers himſelf

ſelf for the victim. Three hundred Spartans are choſen to accompany him to Thermopylæ, and Alpheus returns to the Iſthmus. Leonidas, after an interview with his queen, departs from Lacedæmon. At the end of ſix days, he encamps near the Iſthmus, when he is join'd by Alpheus; who deſcribes the auxiliaries, that wait at the Iſthmus, thoſe, who are already poſſeſs'd of Thermopylæ, as alſo the paſs itſelf; and concludes with a relation of the captivity of his brother Polydorus in Perſia.

REHEARSE, O Muſe, the deeds and glorious death
Of that fam'd Spartan, who withſtood the pow'r
Of Xerxes near Thermopylæ, and fell
To ſave his country. When from Aſia's coaſt
With half the nations of the peopled globe
The Perſian king the Helleſpont had paſs'd,
And now in Thrace his boundleſs camp was ſpread;
Soon to the Iſthmus, where th' aſſembled chiefs
Of Greece in anxious council long had ſat,
How beſt their menac'd liberties to guard,
The dreadful tidings reach'd. The near approach
Of Aſia's lord determines their reſolves.
Theſe they convey to all the Grecian ſtates.
Back to Eurotas' ſhores, where Sparta roſe,
Laconian Alpheus ſpeeds: in council there
He finds the Spartan people with their kings;
Their kings, who boaſt an origin divine,

From

From Hercules deſcended. They the ſons
Of Lacedæmon had conven'd to learn
The ſacred mandates of th' immortal Gods,
That morn expected from the Delphian dome;
But in their preſence Alpheus firſt appear'd,
And thus addreſs'd them. For immediate war
Prepare, O Spartans. Xerxes' num'rous pow'rs
Already fill the trembling bounds of Thrace.
The Iſthmian council hath decreed to guard
The ſtrait and rocky entrance into Greece,
Thermopylæ; where ev'n a ſlender force
May ſtem the torrent of unnumber'd foes.
He ſaid, when Leotychides, who ſhar'd
The rule with great Leonidas, beſpake
The Spartans thus. My countrymen give ear.
Why from her boſom ſhould Laconia ſend
Her valiant ſons to wage a diſtant war
For others' ſafety; why exhauſt her ſtrength
And thin her numbers in defence of thoſe,
Who far remote from Lacedæmon dwell
Beyond the Iſthmus? there the Gods have plac'd
Our native ramparts, there our empire's bound;
And there alone our country claims our ſwords.

He ceas'd. The people with aſſenting ſhouts
Replied, when thus Leonidas began.
O moſt ungen'rous counſel! moſt unjuſt,
And baſe deſertion of the Grecian weal!
What! ſhall th' Athenians, whoſe aſſiduous fleets
Undaunted watch th' innumerable foes,
Where'er they menace our affrighted ſhores,
And truſt th' impending dangers of the field
To Sparta's well-known valour; ſhall they hear,
That we, diſowning thus the gen'ral cauſe,
Maintain the Iſthmus only, and expoſe
The reſt of Greece, ev'n Athens, while ſhe guards
Our naked coaſts, to all the waſte of war,
Her walls to ruin, and her fields to flames,
Her ſons, her matrons, and her hoary ſires
To violation, ſervitude, and ſhame?
O ſhould they hear ſuch counſels guide our ſtate,
Would they not court the firſt propitious gale
To waft them far from ſuch perfidious friends,
And raiſe new ſeats in other climes remote,
Safe from inſulting foes, and falſe allies?
Then ſhould we ſoon behold the proud array
Of Xerxes' navy with their hoſtile beaks
Affront our ſhores, and deluge all our fields

With

With inexhauſted numbers. Half the Greeks,
By us betray'd to bondage, would ſupport
The Perſian king, and lift th' avenging ſpear
For our deſtruction. But my friends reject
Such mean and dang'rous counſels, which will blaſt
Your long eſtabliſh'd glories, and aſſiſt
The proud invader. O eternal king
Of Gods and mortals elevate our minds!
Each low and partial paſſion thence diſpel!
Till this great truth in ev'ry heart be known,
That none, but thoſe, who aid the publick cauſe,
Can ſhield their countries, or themſelves from chains.
He ſaid, by ſhame ſuppreſs'd each clam'rous voice
Was loſt in ſilence; till a gen'ral ſhout
Proclaim'd th' approach of Agis from the fane,
Where, taught by Phœbus on the Delphic hill,
The Pythian maid his oracles reveal'd.
He came; but diſcontent and grief o'ercaſt
His anxious brow. Reluctant he advanc'd,
And now prepar'd to ſpeak. Th' impatient throng
Was gather'd round him; motionleſs they ſtood
With expectation; not a whiſper told
The ſilent fear, but all on Agis gaze;
And ſtill as death attend the ſolemn tale.

As

As o're the weſtern waves, when ev'ry ſtorm
Is huſh'd within its cavern, and a breeze
Soft-breathing lightly with its wings along
The ſlacken'd cordage glides, the ſailor's ear
Perceives no ſound throughout the vaſt expanſe;
None, but the murmurs of the ſliding prowe,
Which ſlowly parts the ſmooth and yielding main:
So through the wide and liſtning croud no ſound,
No voice, but thine, O Agis, broke the air,
Declaring thus the oracle divine.

I WENT to Delphi; I enquir'd what fate
Was doom'd to Sparta from th' impending war;
When thus th' all-ſeeing deity replied.
" Inhabitants of Sparta, Perſia's arms
" Shall lay your proud and ancient ſeat in duſt;
" Unleſs a king from Hercules deriv'd
" Cauſe Lacedæmon for his death to mourn."

As, when the hand of Perſeus had diſclos'd
The ſnakes of dire Meduſa; all, who view'd
The Gorgon features, were congeal'd to ſtone,
With ghaſtly eye-balls on the hero bent,
And horrour living in their marble form:
Thus with amazement rooted, where they ſtood,
And froze with ſpeechleſs terrour, on their kings

The Spartans gaz'd: but ſoon their anxious looks
All on the great Leonidas unite,
Long known his country's refuge. He alone
Remains unſhaken. Riſing, he diſplays
His godlike preſence. Dignity and grace
Adorn his frame, and manly beauty join'd
With ſtrength Herculean. On his aſpect ſhines
Sublimeſt virtue, and deſire of fame,
Where juſtice gives the laurel; in his eye
The inextinguiſhable ſpark, which fires
The ſouls of patriots: while his brow ſupports
Undaunted valour, and contempt of death.
Serene he roſe, and thus addreſs'd the throng.

WHY this aſtoniſhment on ev'ry face,
Ye men of Sparta? Does the name of death
Create this fear and wonder? O my friends!
Why do we labour through the arduous paths,
Which lead to virtue? Fruitleſs were the toil,
Above the reach of human feet were plac'd
The diſtant ſummit, if the fear of death
Could intercept our paſſage. But in vain
His blackeſt frowns and terrours he aſſumes
To ſhake the firmneſs of the mind, which knows,
That wanting virtue life is pain and woe,

That wanting liberty ev'n virtue mourns,
And looks around for happineſs in vain.
Then ſpeak, O Sparta, and demand my life;
My heart exulting anſwers to thy call,
And ſmiles on glorious fate. To live with fame
The Gods allow to many; but to die
With equal luſtre, is a bleſſing, Heav'n
Selects from all the choiceſt boons of fate,
And with a ſparing hand on few beſtows.

He ſaid. New wonder fix'd the gazing throng.
In ſilence Joy and Admiration ſat,
Suſpending praiſe. At length with high acclaim
The arch of heav'n reſounded, when amid
Th' aſſembly ſtood Dieneces, and ſpake.

So from Thermopylæ may Sparta's ſhouts
Affright the ear of Aſia! Haſte, my friends,
To guard the gates of Greece, which open ſtand
To Tyranny and Rapine. They with dread
Will ſhrink before your ſtandards, and again
In ſervile Perſia ſeek their native ſeats.
Your wives, your ſons, your parents, general Greece
Forbid delay; and equal to the cauſe
A chief behold: can Spartans aſk for more?

He

He ceas'd; when Alpheus thus. It well becomes
The Spartans held the chiefs of Greece, and fam'd
For dauntleſs courage, and unyielding hearts,
Which neither want, nor pain, nor death, can bend,
To lead the reſt to battle. Then with ſpeed
From all your number from a choſen band,
While I returning, will my ſeat reſume
Among the Iſthmian council, and declare
Your inſtant march. Our brave allies, I deem,
Now on the Iſthmus wait the Spartan king;
All but the Locrian and Bœotian force,
With Phocis' youth, appointed to ſecure
Thermopylæ. This ſaid, not long he paus'd,
But with unwearied ſteps his courſe renews.
Now from th' aſſembly with majeſtic ſteps
Forth moves their godlike king, with conſcious worth
His gen'rous boſom glowing; like his ſire,
Th' invincible Alcides, when he trod
With ardent ſpeed to face in horrid war
The triple form of Geryon, or againſt
The bulk of huge Antæus match his ſtrength.
Say, Muſe, who next preſent their dauntleſs breaſts
To meet all danger in their country's cauſe?
Dieneces advances ſage, and brave,

And ſkill'd along the martial field to range
The order'd ranks of battle; Maron next,
To Alpheus dear, his brother, and his friend.
Then roſe Megiſtias with his blooming heir,
Joy of his age, and Menalippus call'd;
Megiſtias, wiſe and venerable ſeer,
Whoſe penetrating mind, as fame records,
Could from the entrails of the victim ſlain
Before the altar, and the myſtic flight
Of birds, foreſee the dark events of time.
Though ſprung a ſtranger on the diſtant ſhore
Of Acarnania, for his worth receiv'd,
And hoſpitably cheriſh'd; he the wreath
Pontific bore amid the Spartan camp;
Serene in danger, nor his ſacred arm
From warlike toils ſecluding, nor unſkill'd
To wield the ſword, or poize the weighty ſpear.
Him Agis follow'd, brother to the queen
Of great Leonidas; his friend, in war
His tried companion. Graceful were his ſteps,
And gentle his demeanour. Still his ſoul
Preſerv'd its rigid virtue, though refin'd
With arts unknown to Lacedæmon's race.
High was his office. He, when Sparta's weal

Their

Their aid and counſel from the Gods requir'd,
Was ſent the ſacred meſſenger to learn
Their myſtic will in oracles declar'd
From rocky Delphi, and Dodona's ſhade,
Or ſea-incircled Delos, or the cell
Of dark Trophonius round Bœotia known.
Three hundred more compleat th' intrepid band.
But to his home Leonidas retir'd.
There calm in ſecret thought he thus explor'd
His mighty ſoul, while nature to his breaſt
A ſhort-liv'd terrour call'd. What ſudden grief,
What cold reluctance thus unmans my heart,
And whiſpers, that I fear? —— Can death diſmay
Leonidas, ſo often ſeen and ſcorn'd,
When clad moſt dreadful in the battle's front? ——
Or to relinquiſh life in all its pride,
With all my honours blooming round my head,
Repines my ſoul? or rather to forſake,
Eternally forſake my weeping wife,
My infant offſpring, and my faithful friends? ——
Leonidas awake! Shall theſe withſtand
The public ſafety? Lo! thy country calls.
O ſacred voice, I hear thee! At that ſound
Returning virtue brightens in my heart;

Fear

Fear vaniſhes before her; Death receive
My unreluctant hand, and lead me on.
Thou too, O Fame, attendant on my fall,
With wings unwearied ſhalt protect my tomb,
Nor Time himſelf ſhall violate my praiſe.

The hero thus confirm'd his virtuous ſoul,
When Agis enter'd. If till now my tongue
(He thus began) O brother, has delay'd
To pay its grateful off'ring of the praiſe,
Thy merit claims, and only fill'd the cries
Of general applauſe, forgive thy friend;
Since her diſtreſſes, hers, whom moſt you love,
Detain'd me from thee. O unequall'd man!
Though Lacedæmon call thy firſt regard,
Forget not her, who now for thee laments
In ſorrows, which fraternal love in vain
Hath ſtrove to ſooth. Leonidas embrac'd
His gen'rous friend, and thus replied. Moſt dear
And beſt of men! conceive not, but my heart
Muſt ſtill remember her, from whom my life
Its largeſt ſhare of happineſs derives.
Can I, who yield my breath, leſt others mourn,
Leſt thouſands ſhould be wretched; when ſhe pines,
More lov'd than any, though leſs dear than all,

Can I neglect her griefs! In future days
If thou with grateful memory record
My name and fate, O Sparta, paſs not this
Unheeded by. The life, I gave for thee,
Knew not a painful hour to tire my ſoul,
Nor were they common joys, I left behind.
So ſpake the patriot, and his heart o'erflow'd
With fondeſt paſſion; then in eager haſte
The faithful partner of his bed he ſought.
Amid her weeping children ſat the queen,
Immoveable and mute; her ſwimming eyes
Fix'd on the earth. Her arms were folded o'er
Her lab'ring boſom blotted with her tears.
As, when a duſky miſt involves the ſky,
The moon through all the dreary vapours ſpreads
The radiant veſture of its ſilver light
O'er the dull face of nature; ſo her charms
Divinely graceful ſhone upon her grief,
Bright'ning the cloud of woe. The chief approach'd.
Soon as in gentleſt phraſe his well-known voice
Her drooping mind awaken'd, for a time
Its cares were huſh'd: ſhe lifts her languid head,
And thus gives utt'rance to her tender thoughts.

O THOU, whoſe preſence is my only joy,
If thus, Leonidas, thy looks and voice
Can diſſipate at once the ſharpeſt pangs,
How greatly am I wretched; who no more
Muſt hear that voice, which lulls my anguiſh thus,
Nor ſee that face, which makes affliction ſmile!
THIS ſaid, returning grief her breaſt invades.
Her orphan children, her devoted lord
Pale, bleeding, breathleſs on the field of death,
Her ever-during ſolitude of woe,
All riſe in mingled horrour to her ſight,
When thus in bitt'reſt agony ſhe ſpoke.
O WHITHER art thou going from my arms!
Shall I no more behold thee! Oh! no more
In conqueſt clad, and wrapt in glorious duſt
Wilt thou return to greet thy native ſoil,
And make thy dwelling joyful! Yet, too brave,
Why wouldſt thou haſten to the dreary gates
Of death, uncall'd? Another might have fall'n,
Like thee a victim of Alcides' race,
Leſs dear to all, and Sparta been ſecure.
Now ev'ry eye with mine is drown'd in tears,
All with theſe babes lament their father loſt.
But oh! how heavy is our lot of pain!

Our

Our ſighs muſt laſt, when ev'ry other breaſt
Exults with tranſport, and the public joy
Will but increaſe our anguiſh. Yet unmov'd,
Thou didſt not heed our ſorrows, didſt not ſeek
A moment's pauſe, to teach us how to bear
Thy endleſs abſence, or like thee to die.
UNUTTERABLE ſorrow here confin'd
Her voice. Theſe words Leonidas return'd.
I SEE, I feel thy anguiſh, nor my ſoul
Has ever known the prevalence of love,
E'er prov'd a father's fondneſs, as this hour;
Nor, when moſt ardent to aſſert my fame,
Was once my heart inſenſible to thee.
How had it ſtain'd the honours of my name
To heſitate a moment, and ſuſpend
My country's fate, till ſhameful life prefer'd
By my inglorious colleague left no choice,
But what in me were infamy to ſhun,
Not virtue to accept? Then deem no more,
That of thy love regardleſs, or thy tears,
I haſte uncall'd to death. The voice of Fate,
The Gods, my fame, my country bid me bleed.
— Oh! thou dear mourner! wherefore ſtreams afreſh
That flood of woe? Why heaves with ſighs renew'd

That tender breaſt? Leonidas muſt fall.
Alas! far heavier miſery impends
O'er thee and theſe, if ſoften'd by thy tears
I ſhamefully refuſe to yield that breath,
Which juſtice, glory, liberty, and heav'n
Claim for my country, for my ſons, and thee.
Think on my long unalter'd love. Reflect
On my paternal fondneſs. Has my heart
E'er known a pauſe of love, or pious care?
Now ſhall that care, that tenderneſs be prov'd
Moſt warm and faithful. When thy huſband dies
For Lacedæmon's ſafety, thou wilt ſhare,
Thou and thy children, the diffuſive good.
Should I, thus ſingled from the reſt of men,
Alone intruſted by th' immortal Gods
With pow'r to ſave a people, ſhould my ſoul
Deſert that ſacred cauſe, thee too I yield
To ſorrow, and to ſhame; for thou muſt weep
With Lacedæmon, muſt with her ſuſtain
Thy painful portion of oppreſſion's weight.
Thy ſons behold now worthy of their names,
And Spartan birth. Their growing bloom muſt pine
In ſhame and bondage, and their youthful hearts
Beat at the ſound of liberty no more.

On their own virtue, and their father's ſame,
When he the Spartan freedom hath confirm'd,
Before the world illuſtrious ſhall they riſe,
Their country's bulwark, and their mother's joy.
HERE paus'd the patriot. With religious awe
Grief heard the voice of Virtue. No complaint
The ſolemn ſilence broke. Tears ceas'd to flow:
Ceas'd for a moment; ſoon again to ſtream.
For now in arms before the palace rang'd
His brave companions of the war demand
Their leader's preſence; then her griefs renew'd,
Too great for utt'rance, intercept her ſighs,
And freeze each accent on her falt'ring tongue.
In ſpeechleſs anguiſh on the hero's breaſt
She ſinks. On ev'ry ſide his children preſs,
Hang on his knees, and kiſs his honour'd hand.
His ſoul no longer ſtruggles to confine
Its ſtrong compunction. Down the hero's cheek,
Down flows the manly ſorrow. Great in woe
Amid his children, who incloſe him round,
He ſtands indulging tenderneſs and love
In graceful tears; when thus with lifted eyes
Addreſs'd to heav'n: Thou ever-living pow'r
Look down propitious, fire of Gods and men!

And to this faithful woman, whoſe deſert
May claim thy favour, grant the hours of peace.
And thou, my great forefather, ſon of Jove,
O Hercules, neglect not theſe thy race!
But ſince that ſpirit, I from thee derive,
Now bears me from them to reſiſtleſs fate,
Do thou ſupport their virtue! be they taught,
Like thee, with glorious labour life to grace,
And from their father let them learn to die!
So ſaying, forth he iſſues, and aſſumes
Before the band his ſtation of command.
They now proceed. So mov'd the hoſt of heav'n
Down from Olympus in majeſtic march,
On Jove attendant to the flaming plains
Of Phlegra, there to face the giant ſons
Of Earth and Titan: he before them tow'r'd.
Thus through the ſtreets of Lacedæmon paſs'd
Leonidas. Before his footſteps bow
The multitude exulting. On he treads
Rever'd and honour'd. Their inraptur'd ſight
Purſues his graceful ſtature, and their tongues
Extol and hail him as their guardian God.
Firm in his nervous hand he graſps his ſpear.
Down from his ſhoulders to his ankles hangs

The maſſy ſhield, and o'er his burniſh'd helm
The purple plumage nods. Harmonious youths,
Around whoſe brows entwining laurels play'd,
In lofty-ſounding ſtrains his praiſe record;
While ſnowy-finger'd virgins all the ways
With od'rous garlands ſtrew'd. His boſom now
Was all poſſeſs'd with glory, which diſpell'd
Whate'er of grief remain'd, or fond regret
For thoſe, he left behind. The rev'rend train
Of Lacedæmon's ſenate now approach'd
To give their ſolemn, laſt farewel, and grace
Their hero's parting ſteps. Around him flow'd
In civil pomp their venerable robes
Mix'd with the blaze of arms. The radiant troop
Of warriours preſs'd behind him. Maron here,
With Menalippus warm in flow'ry prime,
And Agis there with manly grace advanc'd,
Dieneces, and Acarnania's ſeer,
Megiſtias ſage. The Spartan dames aſcend
The loftieſt domes, and thronging o'er the roofs
Gaze on their ſons and huſbands, as they march.
So parted Argo from th' Iolchian ſtrand,
And plough'd the foaming ſurge. Theſſalia's nymphs
Their hills forſaking, and their hallow'd groves,

Rang'd on the cliffs, which overſhade the deep,
Still on the diſtant veſſel fix'd their ſight;
Where Greece her choſen heroes had embark'd
To ſeek the dangers of the Cholchian ſhore.
SWIFT on his courſe Leonidas proceeds.
Soon is Eurotas paſs'd, and Lerna's banks,
Where his unconquer'd anceſtor ſubdu'd
The many-headed Hydra, and with fame
Immortaliz'd the lake. Th' unwearied bands
Next through the pines of Mænalus he led,
And down Parthenius urg'd the rapid toil.
Six days inceſſant thus the Spartans march,
When now they hear the hoarſe-reſounding tide
Beat on the Iſthmus. Here their tents they ſpread.
Below the wide horizon then the ſun
Had ſunk his beamy head. The queen of night
Gleam'd from the centre of th' ethereal vault,
And o'er the duſky robe of darkneſs ſhed
Her ſilver light. Leonidas detains
Dieneces and Agis. Open ſtands
The tall pavilion, and admits the moon.
As here they ſat converſing, from the hill,
Which roſe before them, one of noble port
Appears with ſpeed deſcending. Lightly down

The ſlope he treads, and calls aloud. They heard,
And knew the voice of Alpheus. From their ſeats
They roſe, and thus Leonidas began.
O THOU, whom heav'n with ſwiftneſs hath endu'd
To match the ardour of thy daring ſoul,
What calls thee from the Iſthmus? Do the Greeks
Neglect to arm, nor face the public foe?
I COME to meet thee (Alpheus thus return'd)
A meſſenger, who gladſome tidings bears.
Through Greece the voice of liberty is heard,
And all unfold their banners in her cauſe;
The Thebans only with reluctant hands.
Arcadia's ſons with morning ſhalt thou join,
Who on the Iſthmus wait thy great command.
With Diophantus Mantinéa ſends
Five hundred ſpears; nor leſs from Tegea's walls
With Hegeſander move. A thouſand more,
Who in Orchomenus reſide, who range
Along Parrhaſius, and Cyllene's brow,
Or near the foot of Erymanthus dwell,
Or on Alphéus' banks, with various chiefs,
Attend thy call; but moſt is Clonius fam'd
Of ſtature huge: unſhaken as a rock,
His giant bulk the line of war ſuſtains.

Four hundred warriours brave Alcmæon draws
From ſtately Corinth's tow'rs. Two hundred march
From Phlius, whom Eupalamus commands.
An equal number of Mycenæ's race
Ariſtobulus heads. Through fear alone
Of thee, and threatning Greece the Thebans arm.
To theſe inglorious Greeks my ſelf repair'd
Their dying ſenſe of honour to recal.
A few corrupted by the Perſian gold,
Unjuſt dominion have uſurp'd in Thebes.
Theſe in each boſom quell the gen'rous flame
Of liberty. The eloquent they bribe;
With ſpecious tales the multitude they cheat;
And proſtitute the name of public good
To veil oppreſſion. Others are immers'd
In all the ſloth of riches, and unmov'd
In ſhameful eaſe behold their country fall.
I firſt implor'd their ſenate's inſtant aid,
But they with artful wiles demanding time
For conſultation, I addreſs'd them thus.
The ſhorteſt moment may ſuffice to know,
If to die free be better than to ſerve;
But if, deluding Greece by vain delays,
You mean to ſhew your friendſhip to the foe,

You cannot then deliberate too long,
How to withſtand her ſwift-avenging wrath,
Approaching with Leonidas. This heard,
Four hundred warriours they appoint to march.
The wily Anaxander is their chief,
With Leontiades. I ſaw their march
Begun, then haſten'd to ſurvey the ſtraits,
Which thou ſhalt render ſacred to renown.
Where, ever mingling with the crumbling ſoil,
Which moulders round the Malian bay, the ſea
In ſlimy ſurges rolls; upon the rock,
Which forms the utmoſt limit of the bay,
Thermopylæ is ſtretch'd. Where broadeſt ſpread,
It meaſures threeſcore paces, bounded here
By the deep ooze, which underneath preſents
Its dreary ſurface; there the lofty cliffs
Of woody Oeta overlook the paſs,
And far beyond o'er half the ſurge below
Their horrid umbrage caſt. Acroſs the ſtraits
An ancient bulwark of the Phocians ſtands,
A wall with turrets crown'd. In ſtation here
I found the Locrians, and from Theſpia's gates
Sev'n hundred more Demophilus hath led.
His brother's ſon attends him to the camp,

Young Dithyrambus greatly fam'd in war,
But more for temperance of mind renown'd;
Lov'd by his country, and with honours grac'd,
His early bloom with brighteſt glory ſhines,
Nor wantons in the blaze. Here Agis ſpake.

WELL haſt thou painted that illuſtrious youth.
He was my hoſt at Theſpia. Though adorn'd
With higheſt deeds, by fame and fortune crown'd,
His gentle virtues take from envy's mouth
Its blaſting venom, and her baneful face
Strives on his worth to ſmile. In ſilence all
Again remain, and Alpheus thus purſues.

A CHOSEN troop hath bold Platæa ſent,
Small in its numbers, but unmatch'd in arms.
Above the reſt Diomedon their chief
Excels in proweſs. Signal were his deeds
Upon that day of glory, when the fields
Of Marathon were hid with Perſian ſlain.
Theſe guard Thermopylæ. Among the hills
A winding path to ſtranger's feet unknown
Affords another entrance into Greece:
This by a thouſand Phocians is ſecur'd.

HERE Alpheus paus'd. Leonidas embrac'd
The noble Spartan, and rejoin'd. Thou know'ſt

What

What fate to me th' immortal Gods ordain.
Frame now thy choice. Accompany our march,
Or go to Lacedæmon, and relate,
How thy diſcerning mind, and active limbs
Have ſerv'd thy country. From th' impatient mouth
Of Alpheus ſtreight theſe fervent accents broke.
I HAVE not meaſur'd ſuch a tract of land,
Not look'd unwearied on the ſetting ſun,
And through the ſhade of midnight urg'd my ſteps
To rouſe the Greeks to battle, that myſelf
Might be exempted from the glorious toil.
Return? Oh! no. A ſecond time my feet
Shall viſit thee, Thermopylæ, and there
With great Leonidas ſhall Alpheus find
An honourable grave. And oh! amid
His country's danger if a Spartan breaſt
May feel a private ſorrow, not alone
For injur'd Greece I haſten to revenge,
But for a brother's wrongs. A younger hope
Than I, or Maron bleſs'd our father's years,
Child of his age, and Polydorus nam'd.
His mind, while tender in its op'ning prime,
Was bent to rigid virtue. Gen'rous ſcorn
Of pain and danger taught his early ſtrength

To ſtruggle patient with ſevereſt toils.
Oft, when inclement winter chill'd the air,
And frozen ſhow'rs had ſwoln Eurotas' ſtream,
Amid th' impetuous channel would he plunge,
And breaſt the torrent. On a fatal day,
As in the ſea his active limbs he bath'd,
A ſervile corſair of the Perſian king
My brother, naked and defenceleſs, bore
Ev'n in my ſight to Aſia, there to waſte,
With all the promiſe of its growing worth,
His youth in bondage. Never can my tongue
My pains recount, much leſs my father's woes,
The days he wept, the ſleepleſs nights he beat
His aged boſom. And ſhall Alpheus' ſpear
Be abſent from Thermopylæ, nor claim,
O Polydorus, vengeance for thy bonds
In that firſt ſlaughter of the barb'rous foe?

HERE interpos'd Dieneces. The hands
Of Alpheus and Leonidas he graſp'd,
And joyful thus. Your glory wants no more,
Than that Lycurgus ſhould himſelf ariſe
To praiſe the virtue, which his laws inſpire.

THUS paſs'd theſe heroes, till the dead of night,
The hours in friendly converſe, and enjoy'd

Each

Each other's virtue; happieſt of men!
At length with gentle heavineſs the hand
Of ſleep invades their eyelids. On the ground,
Oppreſs'd with ſlumber, they extend their limbs;
When, ſliding down the hemiſphere, the moon
Now plung'd in midnight gloom her ſilver head.

End of the Firſt Book.

LEONIDAS.

BOOK II.

The Argument.

Leonidas, on his approach to the Iſthmus, is met by the leaders of the troops ſent from other Grecian ſtates, and by the deputies, who compos'd the Iſthmian council. He harangues them, then proceeds in conjunction with the other forces towards Thermopylæ; is join'd by Dithyrambus, and arrives at the ſtraits about noon on the fourth day after his departure from the Iſthmus. He is receiv'd at Thermopylæ by the Theſpian commander Demophilus, and by Anaxander the Theban treacherouſly recommending Epialtes a Malian, who ſeeks by a pompous deſcription of the Perſian power to intimidate the Grecian leaders, as they are viewing the enemies camp from the top of mount Oeta. He is anſwer'd by Dieneces and Diomedon. Xerxes ſends Tigranes and Phraortes to the Grecian camp, who are diſmiſs'd by Leonidas, and conducted back by Dithyrambus and Diomedon; which laſt, incens'd with the inſolence of Tigranes, treats him with contempt and menaces. This occaſions a challenge to ſingle combat between Diomedon and Tigranes, Dithyrambus and Phraortes. Epialtes, after a conference with Anaxander, declares his intention of returning to Xerxes.

AURORA

AURORA ſpread her purple beams around,
When mov'd the Spartans. Their approach is known.
The Iſthmian council, and the various chiefs,
Who led th' auxiliar bands, proceed to meet
Leonidas; Eupalamus the ſtrong,
Alcmæon, Clonius, Diophantus brave,
And Hegeſander. At their head advanc'd
Ariſtobulus, whom Mycenæ's youth
Attend to war; Mycenæ once elate
With pow'r and dazzling wealth, and vaunting ſtill
The name of Agamemnon, who along
The ſeas of Aſia open'd to the wind
Unnumber'd ſails, and darken'd half the ſhore
Of trembling Phrygia with the hoſtile ſhade.
Ariſtobulus join'd the Spartan king,
And thus began. Leonidas ſurvey
Mycenæ's race. Should ev'ry other Greek
Be aw'd by Xerxes, and his Aſian hoſt,
Believe not, we can fear, deriv'd from thoſe,
Who once conducted o'er the foaming ſurge
The ſtrength of Greece, who deſert left the fields
Of ravag'd Aſia, and her proudeſt walls
From their foundations humbled to the duſt.

LEONIDAS replied not, but addreſs'd
The chiefs around. Illuſtrious warriours hail,
Who thus undaunted ſignalize your faith,
And gen'rous ardour in the common cauſe.
But you, whoſe counſels prop the Grecian ſtate,
O venerable ſynod, whoſe decrees
Have call'd us forth, to vanquiſh, or to die,
Thrice hail. Whate'er by valour we obtain
Your wiſdom muſt preſerve. With piercing eyes
Each Grecian ſtate contemplate, and diſcern
Their various tempers. Some with partial care
To guard their own neglect the publick weal.
Cold and unmov'd are others. Terrour here,
And there corruption reigns. O fire the brave
With gen'rous zeal to quit their native walls,
And join their valour in the gen'ral cauſe;
Confirm the wav'ring; animate the cold,
And watch the faithleſs: ſome there are, betray
Themſelves and Greece; their perfidy prevent,
Or call them back to honour. Let us all
Be link'd in ſacred union, and the Greeks
Shall ſtand the world's whole multitude in arms.
If for the ſpoil, which Paris bore to Troy,
A thouſand barks the Helleſpont o'erſpread;

Shall

Shall not again confederated Greece
Be rous'd to battle, and to freedom give
What once ſhe gave to fame. Behold we haſte
To ſtop th' invading tyrant. Till we bleed,
He ſhall not pour his millions on your plains.
But as the Gods conceal, how long our ſtrength
May ſtand unconquer'd, or how ſoon muſt fall,
Waſte not a moment, till conſenting Greece
Range all her free-born numbers in the field.

LEONIDAS concludes, when awful ſtep'd
Before the ſage aſſembly one, whoſe head
Was hoar with aged ſnow, and thus replied.

THY great example ev'ry heart unites.
From thee her happieſt omens Greece derives
Of concord, freedom, victory, and fame.
Go then, O firſt of mortals, and impreſs
Amaze and terrour in the Perſians breaſt;
The free-born Greeks inſtructing life to deem
Leſs dear than virtue, and their country's cauſe.

THIS heard, Leonidas, thy ſecret ſoul
Exulting taſted of the ſweet reward
Due to thy name from endleſs time. His eyes
Once more he turn'd, and view'd in rapt'rous thought
His native land, which he alone can ſave;

Then

Then ſummon'd all his majeſty, and o'er
The Iſthmus trod. Behind the Grecians move
In deep arrangement. So th' imperial bark
With ſtately bulk along the beating tide
In military pomp conducts the pow'r
Of ſome proud navy bounding from the port
To bear the vengeance of a mighty ſtate
Againſt a tyrant's walls. The Grecians march
Till noon, when halting, as they take repaſt,
Upon the plain before them they deſcry
A troop of Theſpians. One above the reſt
In eminence precedes. His glitt'ring ſhield,
Whoſe ſpacious orb collects th' effulgent beams,
Which from his throne meridian Phœbus caſt,
Flames like another ſun. A ſnowy plume
Falls o'er his dazzling caſk. In wanton curls,
Which floated in the breathing air, around
The lofty creſt it wav'd. Approaching near
Beneath the honours of his radiant helm
The warriour now a countenance diſplay'd,
Where youth in roſy prime with ſweetneſs mix'd
Its manly beauty. With ſuch modeſt grace
Reſpectful near Leonidas he came,
As all ideas of his own deſert

Were loſt in veneration. Phœbus thus
Appears before his everlaſting ſire,
When from his altar in th' imbow'ring grove
Of palmy Delos, or the hallow'd bound
Of Tenedos, or Claros, where he hears
His hymns and praiſes from the ſons of men,
He reaſcends the high Olympian ſeats;
Such reverential awe his brow inveſts,
Diffuſing o'er the glowing flow'r of youth
New lovelineſs and grace. The king receives
Th' illuſtrious Theſpian, and began. My tongue
Would call thee Dithyrambus, for thou bear'ſt
All in thy aſpect to become that name
For valour known and virtue. O reveal
Thy birth and charge; whoe'er thou art, my ſoul
Deſires to know thee, and would call thee friend.
To whom the youth return'd. O firſt of Greeks,
My name is Dithyrambus, which the lips
Of ſome benevolent and gen'rous friend
To thee have ſounded with a partial voice,
And thou haſt heard with favourable ears.
I come deputed by the Theſpian chief,
The Theban, and the Locrian, and the brave
Diomedon, to haſten thy approach.

Three days will bring the perſian pow'rs in view.
He ceas'd. At once the ſtandards are uprear'd.
The hoſt till ev'ning with impetuous pace
Their march continue. Through the earlieſt dews
Of morning they proceed, and reach the paſs,
E're the fourth ſun attain'd the ſultry noon.
To their impatient ſight no ſooner roſe
The rocks of Oeta, but with rapid feet,
And martial ſounds of joy they ruſh'd along;
As if the preſent deity of Fame,
Her temples with unfading laurels bound,
And in her hand her adamantine trump,
Had from the hills her radiant form diſclos'd,
And bade their valour haſten to the field;
That ſhe their acts beholding might reſound
Their name and glory o'er the earth and ſeas.
Before the van Leonidas advanc'd,
His eye confeſs'd the ardour of his mind,
Which thus found utt'rance from his eager lips.
All hail! Thermopylæ, and you, the pow'rs,
Which here preſide. All hail! ye ſilvan Gods,
Ye fountain nymphs, who pour your lucid rills
In broken murmurs down the rugged ſteep.
Receive us, O benignant, and ſupport

The

The cauſe of Greece. Conceal the ſecret paths,
Which o'er the crags and through the foreſts wind,
Untrod by human feet, and trac'd alone
By your immortal footſteps. O defend
Your own receſſes, nor let impious war
Profane the ſolemn ſilence of your groves.
Thus on your hills your praiſes ſhall you hear
From thoſe, whoſe deeds ſhall tell th' approving world,
That not to undeſervers did you grant
Your high protection. You my valiant friends
Now rouſe the gen'rous ſpirit, which inflames
Your hearts; now prove the vigour of your arms:
That your recorded actions may ſurvive
Within the breaſts of all the brave and free,
And ſound delightful in the ear of Time,
As long as Neptune beats the Malian bay,
Or thoſe tall cliffs erect their ſhaggy tops
So near to heav'n, your monuments of fame.
As in ſome torrid region, where the head
Of Ceres bends beneath its golden load,
If on the parching ground a fatal ſpark
Fall from a burning brand; the ſudden blaze
Increas'd and aided by tumultuous winds
In rapid torrents of involving flames

Sweeps

Sweeps o'er the crackling plain, and mounting high
In ruddy ſpires illumines half the ſkies:
Not with leſs ſwiftneſs through the glowing ranks
The words of great Leonidas diffus'd
A more than mortal fervour. Ev'ry heart
Diſtends with great ideas, ſuch as raiſe
The patriot's virtue, and the ſoldier's fire,
When danger in its moſt tremendous form
Seems to their eyes moſt lovely. In their thoughts
Imagination pictures all the ſcenes
Of war, the purple field, the heaps of death,
And glitt'ring trophies pil'd with Perſian arms.

But now the Grecian leaders, who before
Were ſtation'd near Thermopylæ, accoſt
The Spartan king. The Theſpian chief allied
To Dithyrambus firſt the ſilence broke,
An ancient warriour. From behind his caſque,
Whoſe creſted weight his aged temples preſs'd,
His ſlender hairs, which time had ſilver'd o'er,
Flow'd venerable down. He thus began.

Joy now ſhall crown the period of my days,
And whether with my father's duſt I ſleep,
Or ſlain by Perſia's ſword I preſs the earth
Our common parent, be it as the Gods

Shall

Shall beſt determine. For the preſent hour
I bleſs their bounty, which has giv'n my age
To ſee the great Leonidas, and bid
The hero welcome on this glorious ſhore;
Where he by heav'n ſelected from mankind
Shall fix the baſis of the Grecian weal.
HERE too the wily Anaxander ſpake.
Hail! glorious chief. Of all the Theban race
We ſhall at leaſt with gladſome boſoms meet
The great defender of the Grecian cauſe.
O! may oblivion o'er the ſhame of Thebes
Its darkeſt wing extend, or they alone
Be curs'd by Fame, whoſe impious counſels turn
Their countrymen from virtue. Thebes alas!
Still had been buried in diſhoneſt ſloth,
Had not to wake her languor Alpheus come
The meſſenger of freedom. O accept
Our grateful hearts; thou, Alpheus, art the cauſe,
That Anaxander from his native gates
Here hath not borne a ſolitary ſpear,
Nor theſe inglorious in their walls remain'd.
But longer do we loiter? Haſte my friends
To yonder cliff, which points its ſhade afar,
And view the Perſian camp. The morning ſun

Beheld their numbers hide th' adjacent plains.
Lo! here a Malian, Epialtes nam'd,
Who with the foe from Thracia's bounds hath march'd.
He ſaid. His ſeeming virtue all deceiv'd.
The camp not long had Epialtes join'd,
By race a Malian. Eloquent his tongue,
But falſe his heart, and abject. He was ſkill'd
To grace perfidious counſels, and to cloath
In ſwelling phraſe the baſeneſs of his ſoul,
Foul nurſe of treaſons. To the tents of Greece,
Himſelf a Greek, a faithleſs ſpy he came.
Soon to the friends of Xerxes he repair'd,
The Theban chiefs, and nightly conſult held,
How beſt with conſternation to deject
The Spartan valour, or how beſt betray.
With him the leaders climb the arduous hill,
From whence the dreadful proſpect they command,
Where endleſs plains by white pavilions hid
Spread, like the vaſt Atlantic, when no ſhore,
No rock or promontory ſtops the ſight
Unbounded, as it wanders; but the moon
Reſplendent eye of night in fulleſt orb
Throughout th' interminated ſurface throws
Its rays abroad, and decks in ſnowy light

The dancing billows; ſuch was Xerxes' camp:
A pow'r unrivall'd by the greateſt king,
Or conqueror, that e'er with ruthleſs hands
Diſſolving all the ſacred ties, which bind
The happineſs of nations, have alarm'd
The ſleeping fury Diſcord from her den.
Not from the hundred brazen gates of Thebes,
The tow'rs of Memphis, and the pregnant fields
By Nile's prolifick torrents delug'd o'er,
E'er flow'd ſuch armies with th' Ægyptian lord
Renown'd Seſoſtris; who with trophies fill'd
The vanquiſh'd earth, and o'er the rapid foam
Of diſtant Tanais, and the huge expanſe
Of trembling Ganges ſpread his dreaded name:
Nor yet in Aſia's far extended bounds
E'er met ſuch numbers, not when Belus drew
Th' Aſſyrian bands to conqueſt, or the pride
Of high-exalted Babylon ſurvey'd
The plains along Euphrates cover'd wide
With armed myriads ſwarming from her walls;
When at the rage of dire Semiramis
Peace fled affrighted from the ravag'd Eaſt.
Yet all this hideous face of war diſmays
No Grecian heart. Unterrified they ſtood.

Th' immeaſurable camp with fearleſs eyes
They traverſe, while in meditation near
The treach'rous Malian waits, collecting all
His pomp of words to paint the hoſtile pow'r;
Nor yet with falſhood arms his fraudful tongue
To feign a tale of terrour: Truth herſelf
Beyond the reach of fiction to inhance
Now aids his treaſon, and with cold diſmay
Might pierce the boldeſt breaſt, unleſs ſecur'd
By dauntleſs virtue, which diſdains to live
From liberty divorc'd. Requeſted now
By ev'ry voice the traitor ſpake, and all
Attentive ears incline. Oh! Greeks and friends!
Can I behold my native Malian fields
Preſenting hoſtile millions to your fight,
And not with grief ſuppreſs the horrid tale,
Which you exact from theſe ill-omen'd lips.
On Thracia's ſands I firſt beheld the foe,
When, joining Europe with the Aſian ſhore,
A mighty bridge th' outragious waves reſtrain'd,
And ſtem'd th' impetuous current; while in arms
The univerſal progeny of men
Seem'd all before me trampling o'er the ſea
By thouſands and ten thouſands: Perſians, Medes,
Aſſyrians,

Aſſyrians, Saces, Indians, ſwarthy files
From Æthiopia, Ægypt's tawny ſons,
Arabians, Baƈtrians, Parthians, all the ſtrength
Of Libya and of Aſia. Neptune groan'd
Beneath the burthen, and indignant heav'd
His neck againſt th' incumbent weight. In vain
The violence of Boreas and the Weſt,
With rage combin'd, againſt th' unſhaken pile
Daſh'd half the Helleſpont. The eaſtern world
Sev'n days and nights uninterrupted paſs,
And pour on Thracia's confines. They accept
The Perſian lord, and range their hardy race
Beneath his ſtandards. Macedonia's youth
With all Theſſalia next, and ev'ry Greek,
Who dwells beyond Thermopylæ, attend.
Thus not alone embodied Aſia lifts
Her threatning lance, but Macedon and Thrace,
Whoſe martial loins with daring warriours teem,
And faithleſs Greeks in multitudes untold
The Perſian Monarch aid. Celeſtial pow'rs!
And thou, who reigneſt over men and Gods,
Who in a moment by thy will ſupreme
Canſt quell the mighty in their proudeſt hopes,
And raiſe the weak to ſafety, thou impart

Thy inſtant ſuccour; interpoſe thy arm;
With lightning blaſt their legions: Oh! confound
With triple-bolted thunder Perſia's camp,
Whence like an inundation with the morn
Shall millions ruſh, and overwhelm the Greeks.
Reſiſtance elſe were vain againſt an hoſt,
Which covers all Theſſalia; for beyond
The Malian plains thus widely ſtretch'd below,
Beyond the utmoſt meaſure of the fight
Bent from the height of this aſpiring cliff,
Lie yet more hideous numbers, which might drain
The ſtreams of copious rivers with their thirſt,
And with their arrows hide the mid-day ſun.
THEN ſhall we join our battle in the ſhade,
Dieneces replied. Not calmly thus
Diomedon. On Xerxes' camp he bends
His low'ring brow, which frowns had furrow'd o'er,
And thus exclaim'd. Bellona turn and view
With joyful eyes that field, the fatal ſtage,
Which regal madneſs hath for you prepar'd
To exerciſe your horrours. Thou, O Death,
Shalt riot here unceaſing, when the rocks
Of yonder paſs with bleeding ranks are ſtrew'd;
And all, who ſhun th' avenging ſteel of Greece,

By peſtilence and meagre famine ſeiz'd,
Shall with variety of ruin feaſt
Thy unabated hunger. Thus he ſpake,
While on the hoſt immenſe his gloomy eyes
He fix'd diſdainful, and its ſtrength defied.
MEANTIME within th' entrenchment of the Greeks
From Aſia's monarch delegated came
Tigranes and Phraortes. From the hills
Leonidas conducts th' impatient chiefs.
Around the hero in his tent they throng,
When thus Tigranes their attention calls.
AMBASSADORS from Perſia's king we ſtand
Before you Grecians. To diſplay the pow'r
Of our great maſter, were a needleſs taſk.
The name of Xerxes, Aſia's mighty lord,
Invincible, and ſeated on a throne
Surpaſſing human luſtre, muſt have reach'd
Th' extremeſt border of the earth, and taught
The hearts of men to own reſiſtleſs force
With awe, and low ſubmiſſion. Yet I ſwear
By yon refulgent orb, which flames above,
The glorious ſymbol of th' eternal pow'r,
This military throng, this ſhew of war
Perſuade me, you have never heard that name,

At whoſe dread ſound the billows wide remote
Of Indus tremble, and the Caſpian wave,
Th' Ægyptian tide, and Helleſpontic ſurge
With homage roll. O impotent and raſh!
Whom yet the large beneficence of heav'n,
And our great monarch merciful and kind
Deign to preſerve. Reſign your arms; diſperſe
Each to your cities; there with humbleſt hands
Before your lord beſtrew the way with flow'rs.

As through th' extenſive grove, whoſe leafy boughs
Intwining crown ſome eminence with ſhade,
The tempeſts ruſh ſonorous, and between
The craſhing branches roar; by fierce diſdain
And indignation thus the Grecians mov'd
With clam'rous murmurs cloſe the Perſian's ſpeech.
But Sparta's king ariſing, all is huſh'd
In ſudden ſilence; when he thus replied.

O Persian, when to Xerxes thou return'ſt,
Say thou haſt told the wonders of his pow'r;
Then ſay, thou ſaw'ſt a ſlender band of Greece,
Which dares his boaſted millions to the field.
The Spartan ſaid. Th' Ambaſſadors retire.
Them o'er the limits of the Grecian lines
Diomedon and Theſpia's youth conduct.

With

With ſlow ſolemnity they all proceed
In ſullen ſilence. But their looks denote
What ſpeech would ſhame and weaken. Wrath contracts
The forehead of Diomedon. His teeth
Gnaſh with impatience for delay'd revenge.
Diſdain, which ſprung from conſcious merit, fluſh'd
The cheek of Dithyrambus. On the face
Of either Perſian inſolence and pride
Incens'd by diſappointment gloomy low'r'd.
But when they reach'd the limits of the ſtraits,
Where Xerxes' camp began to open wide
Its deep, immenſe arrangement; then the heart
Of vain Tigranes, ſwelling at the ſight,
Thus overflows in loud and haughty phraſe.
O ARIMANIUS, origin of ill,
Have we demanded of thy ruthleſs pow'r,
Thus with the curſe of madneſs to afflict
Theſe wretched men? But ſince thy dreadful will
To irreſiſtible perdition dooms
The ſons of Greece, in vain ſhould we oppoſe.
Be thy dire will accompliſh'd, let them fall,
And fatten with their blood their native ſoil:
ENRAG'D the ſtern Diomedon replies.
Thou ſervile, baſe dependent on a king,

Inglorious mercenary, ſlave to thoſe,
Whom moſt we ſcorn, thou boaſter, doſt thou know,
That I beheld the Marathonian field;
When, like the Libyan ſands before the wind,
Your hoſt was ſcatter'd by th' unconquer'd Greeks;
Where thou perhaps didſt turn before this arm
To ignominious flight thy ſhiv'ring limbs?
O may I find thee in to morrow's fight!
Then on this rocky pavement ſhalt thou lie
Beneath this arm to feaſt the vulture's beak.

He ended here, and thus the Perſian chief.
O thou, whoſe hand omnipotent protects
The throne of Xerxes, bend thy ſacred ear!
For lo! my firſt victorious fruits of war
To thee I here devote, the gory ſpoils,
Which from this Grecian with the riſing dawn
In ſight of either hoſt my arm ſhall rend.

Phraortes interrupting then began.
I too would find among the Grecian chiefs
One, who in battle dare abide my ſpear.

To him thus anſwer'd Theſpia's gallant youth.
Thou look'ſt on me, O Perſian. Worthier far
Thou mightſt indeed have ſingled from our hoſt,
But none more willing to eſſay thy force.

Yes,

Yes, I will prove before the eye of Mars,
How far the valour of the meaneſt Greek
Beyond thy vaunts deſerves the palm of fame.
THIS ſaid, the Perſians to their king repair,
Back to their camp the Grecians. There they found
Each ſoldier poizing his extended ſpear,
And his large buckler bracing on his arm,
For inſtant war prepar'd. Through all the files
Each leader moves exulting, and with praiſe
And exhortations aids their native warmth.
Alone the Theban Anaxander pin'd,
Who thus apart addreſs'd his Malian friend.
WHAT has thy lofty eloquence avail'd,
Alas! in vain attempting to confound
The Spartan valour? With redoubled fires
See how their boſoms glow. They wiſh to die,
And wait impatient for th' unequal fight.
Too ſoon will come th' inſuperable foes,
And in promiſcuous ruin all be whelm'd;
Nor ſhall our merit to the Perſian lord
Be told, or known: for whoſe advent'rous feet
To ſerve the Thebans, through the guarded paſs,
The Grecian watch eluding, will approach
The tents of Aſia, that the king may know,

And ſpare his friends amid the gen'ral wreck;
When his high-ſwoln reſentment, like a flood
Increas'd with ſtormy ſhow'rs, ſhall cover Greece
With deſolation? Epialtes here.
WHENCE, Anaxander, this unjuſt deſpair?
Is there a path on Oeta's hills unknown
To Epialtes? O'er the trackleſs rock,
And mazy grove ſhall paſs my ſecret ſteps.
This night I part. Thy merit ſhall be told
To Perſia's king. Thou only watch the hour,
Nor then be tardy, when he wants thy aid.

End of the Second Book.

LEONIDAS:

BOOK III.

The Argument.

Tigranes and Phraortes repair to Xerxes, whom they find ſeated on a throne ſurrounded by his ſatraps in a magnificent pavilion; while the Magi ſtand before him, and ſing an hymn containing the religion of Zoroaſtres. Xerxes, notwithſtanding the arguments of his brothers Hyperanthes and Abrocomes, gives no credit to the ambaſſadors, who report, that the Grecians are determin'd to maintain the paſs againſt him; but commands Demaratus an exil'd king of Sparta to attend him, and aſcends his chariot to take a view of the Grecians himſelf. He paſſes through the midſt of his army, conſiſting of many nations differing in arms, cuſtoms, and manners. He advances to the entrance of the ſtraits, and ſurpris'd at the behaviour of the Spartans demands the reaſon of it from Demaratus; which occaſions a converſation between them on the mercenary forces of Perſia, and the militia of Greece. Demaratus weeping at the ſight of his countrymen, is comforted by Hyperanthes. Xerxes ſtill incredulous commands Tigranes and Phraortes to bring the Grecians bound before him the next day, and retires to his pavilion.

NOW

NOW had Tigranes, and Phraortes gain'd
The ſplendid tent of Xerxes. Him they found
Begirt with princes, and illuſtrious chiefs,
The potentates of Aſia. Near his ſide
His valiant brothers ſtood, Abrocomes,
And Hyperanthes, then Pharnuchus brave,
Pandates, Intaphernes, mighty lords,
And numbers more in purple ſplendour clad,
With homage all attending round the throne,
Whoſe gorgeous ſeat erected high upbore
Their regal maſter. He above their heads
Look'd down imperious. So the ſtately tow'r
Of Belus, mingling its majeſtick front
With heav'n's bright azure, from on high ſurvey'd
The huge extent of Babylon, with all
Its ſumptuous domes and palaces beneath.
That day the monarch deem'd to enter Greece,
And hide her fields with war; but firſt ordains,
That grateful hymns ſhould celebrate the name
Of Oromaſdes: ſo the Perſians call'd
The world's great author. By the king's decree
The Magi ſtood before th' unfolded tent.
Fire blaz'd beſide them. Tow'rds the ſacred flame
They turn'd, and ſent their tuneful praiſe to heav'n.

From Zoroaſtres was the ſong deriv'd,
Who on the hills of Perſia from his cave
With flow'rs incircled, and with murm'ring founts,
That chear'd the ſolemn manſion, had reveal'd,
How Oromaſdes, radiant ſource of good,
Original, immortal fram'd the globe
With all its varied beauty: how with ſtars
By him the heav'ns were ſpangled: how the ſun,
Refulgent Mithra, pureſt ſpring of light,
And genial warmth, whence fruitful Nature ſmiles,
Burſt from the eaſt at his creating voice;
When ſtreight beyond the golden verge of day
Night ſhew'd the horrours of her diſtant reign,
Whence black, and hateful Arimanius ſprung,
The author foul of evil: he with ſhades
From his dire manſion veil'd the earth and ſkies,
Or to deſtruction chang'd the ſolar beam,
When parching fields deny the foodful grain,
And from their channels fly th' exhaling ſtreams,
Whence peſtilence, and famine: how the pow'r
Of Oromaſdes in the human breaſt
Benevolence, and equity infus'd,
Truth, temperance, and wiſdom ſprung from heav'n;
When Arimanius blacken'd all the ſoul,

With

With falſhood, and injuſtice, with deſires
Inſatiable, with violence, and rage,
Malignity, and folly. If the hand
Of Oromaſdes on precarious life
Shed wealth, and pleaſure, ſoon th' infernal God
With wild exceſs, or av'rice blaſts the joy.
Thou, Oromaſdes, victory doſt give.
By thee with fame the regal head is crown'd.
Great Xerxes owns thy ſuccour. When with ſtorms
The hate of direful Arimanius ſwell'd
The Helleſpont, thou o'er the angry ſurge
The deſtin'd maſter of the world didſt lead,
This day his promis'd glories to enjoy,
When Greece affrighted to his arm ſhall bend;
Ev'n as at laſt ſhall Arimanius fall
Before thy might, and evil be no more.

THE Magi ceas'd their harmony; when now
Before the king with adoration bow'd
Tigranes and Phraortes. Prone they lay,
And o'er their foreheads ſpread their abject hands,
As from a preſent deity too bright
For mortal viſion to conceal their eyes.
At length in humble phraſe Tigranes thus.

O XERXES,

O XERXES, live for ever! Gracious lord!
Who doſt permit thy ſervants to approach
Thy awful ſight, and proſtrate thus to own
Thy majeſty and greatneſs. May the pow'r
Of Oromaſdes ſtretch thy ſcepter'd arm
O'er all the nations from the Indian ſhores,
Ev'n to the waters of the weſtern main,
From northern Tanais to the ſource of Nile!
And ſtill from thee may Arimanius turn
Againſt thy foes his malice to mankind!
By him, ev'n now with frenzy ſmote, the Greeks
Reject thy proffer'd clemency. The morn
Shall ſee them bleed the victims of thy wrath.
HERE, to his brothers turning, Xerxes ſpake.
Say, Hyperanthes? Does thy ſoul believe
Theſe tydings? Sure theſe ſlaves have never dar'd
To face the Grecians, but delude our ear
With baſe impoſtures, which their fears ſuggeſt.
To him this anſwer Hyperanthes form'd.
O from his ſervants may the king avert
His indignation! Greece was fam'd of old
For martial virtue, and intrepid ſons:
I have eſſay'd their valour, and with me
Abrocomes can witneſs. When our fire

The great Darius to th' Athenian ſhore
With Artaphernes, and with Datis ſent
Our tender youth; at Marathon we found,
How vain the hopes, that numbers ſhould diſmay
A foe reſolv'd on victory, or death.
Yet not as one contemptible, or baſe
Let me appear before thee: though the Greeks
With ſuch unconquer'd ſpirits be indu'd,
Soon as the king ſhall ſummon me to war,
He ſhall behold me in the dang'rous van
Exalt my ſpear, and pierce the hoſtile ranks,
Or ſink before them. Xerxes then return'd;
WHY over Aſia, and the Libyan ſoil,
With all their nations does my potent arm
Extend its ſcepter? Wherefore do I ſweep
Acroſs the globe with millions in my train?
Why ſhade the Ocean with unnumber'd ſails?
Whence all this pow'r, unleſs th' eternal will
Had doom'd to give one maſter to the world,
And that the earth's extremity alone
Should bound my empire? He for this reduc'd
Revolted Ægypt, and inlarg'd my ſway
With ſandy Libya, and the ſultry clime
Of Æthiopia. He for this ſubdu'd

The Helleſpontic rage, and taught the ſea
Obedience to my pow'r. Then ceaſe to think,
That heav'n deſerting now the cauſe of kings
Thoſe deſpicable Grecians will inſpire
With courage more than human, and expunge
The common fears of nature from their breaſts.
He ceas'd, when thus Abrocomes began.
The king commands us to reveal our hearts:
Then may the ſun to lightning change his beams
And blaſt my head with ruin; may the king
Look on his ſervant with a loathing eye,
If what I here affirm be falſe, or vain,
That yonder Grecians will oppoſe our courſe.
The king aroſe. No more: prepare my Car;
The Spartan exile Demaratus call:
We will our ſelves advance and view the foe.
The monarch will'd; and ſuddenly he hears
His trampling horſes. High on ſilver wheels
The iv'ry car with azure ſapphirs ſhone,
Cærulean beryls, and the jaſper green,
The emerald, the ruby's glowing bluſh,
The flaming topaz with its golden beam,
The pearl, th' impurpled amethyſt, and all
The various gems, which India's mines afford

To deck the pomp of kings. In burniſh'd gold
A ſculptur'd eagle from behind diſplays
Its ſtately neck, and o'er the monarch's head
Extends its dazzling wings. Eight gen'rous ſteeds,
Which on the fam'd Nyſæan plain were nurs'd
In wintry Media, drew the radiant car.
Not thoſe of old to Hercules refus'd
By falſe Laomedon, nor they, which bore
The ſon of Thetis through the ſcatter'd rear
Of Troy's devoted race, might theſe ſurpaſs
In ſtrength, or beauty. With obedient pride
They heard their lord: exulting in the air
They toſs'd their foreheads, while the ſilver manes
Smote on their glitt'ring necks. The king aſcends:
Beſide his footſtool Demaratus ſat.
The charioteer now ſhakes the golden reins,
Bold Patiramphes. At the ſignal bound
Th' attentive ſteeds; the chariot flew; behind
Ten thouſand horſe in thunder ſwept the field.
The eaſtern bands (ſo Xerxes had ordain'd)
Between the ſea-beat margin, and the camp
All wait imbattled, all prepar'd to paſs
Thermopylæ. To theſe with rapid wheels
Th' imperial car proceeds. Th' approaching king

Soon

Soon through the wide battalions is proclaim'd.
He now draws nigh. Th' innumerable hoſt
Roll back by nations, and admit their lord
With all his ſatraps. From his cryſtal dome
Rais'd on the bottom of the watry world,
Thus when the potent ruler of the floods
With each cærulean deity aſcends,
Thron'd on his pearly chariot; all the deep
Divides its boſom to th' emerging God.
So Xerxes rode between the Aſian world
On either ſide receding; when, as down
Th' immeaſurable ranks his ſight was loſt,
A momentary gloom o'ercaſt his mind,
While this reflection fill'd his eyes with tears:
That ſoon, as Time an hundred years had told,
Not one of all thoſe thouſands ſhould ſurvive.
Whence to obſcure thy pride aroſe that cloud?
Was it, that once humanity could touch
A tyrant's breaſt? or rather did thy ſoul
Repine, O Xerxes, at the bitter thought,
That all thy pow'r was mortal? But the veil
Of ſadneſs ſoon forſook his brightning eyes,
As with adoring homage millions bow'd,
And to his heart relentleſs pride recall'd.

Elate

Elate the mingled proſpect he ſurveys
Of glitt'ring files unnumber'd, chariots ſcyth'd
On thund'ring axles roll'd with haughty ſteeds
In ſumptuous trappings clad (Barbaric pomp)
Which tore with ſpurning hoofs the ſandy beach:
While ev'ry banner to the ſun expands
Its gorgeous folds, that beam'd with gold, with ſhields,
Tiaras, helms environ'd, and with ſpears
In number equal to the bladed graſs,
Whoſe living green in vernal beauty cloaths
Theſſalia's vale. What pow'rs of ſounding verſe
Can to the mind preſent th' amazing ſcene?
Not thee, whom Rumour's fabling voice delights,
Poetic Fancy, to my aid I call;
But thou, hiſtoric Truth, ſupport my ſong,
Which ſhall the various multitude diſplay,
Their arms, their manners, and their native ſeats.

The Perſians firſt in ſcaly corſelets ſhone
With colours varying on the gorgeous ſleeves,
A gen'rous nation. From their infant age
Their tongues were practis'd in the love of truth,
Their limbs inur'd to ev'ry manly toil,
To brace the bow, to rule th' impetuous ſteed,
And dart the javelin; worthy to enjoy

The liberty, their injur'd fathers loſt,
Whoſe arms for Cyrus overturn'd the ſtrength
Of Babylon and Sardis, and advanc'd
The victors head above his country's laws.
Such were the Perſians; but untaught to form
The ranks of battle, with unequal force
Againſt the phalanx of the Greeks they ſtood,
And to the maſſy ſhield, and weighty ſpear
A target light, and ſlender lance oppos'd.
On ev'ry head tiaras roſe, like tow'rs,
Impenetrable. All with burniſh'd gold
Blaz'd their gay ſandals, and the floating reins
Of each proud courſer. Daggers from their thighs,
A well-ſtor'd quiver from their ſhoulders hung,
And ſtrongeſt bows of mighty ſize they bore.
Next, with reſembling arms the Medes are ſeen,
The Ciſſians, and Hyrcanians. Media once
From her bleak mountains aw'd the ſubject Eaſt.
Her kings in cold Ecbatana were thron'd.
The Ciſſians march'd from Suſa's regal walls,
From ſultry fields o'erſpread with branching palms,
And white with lillies, water'd by the tides
Of fam'd Choaſpes, whoſe tranſparent waves
The golden goblet wafts to Perſia's kings.

No other ſtream the royal lip bedews.
Hyrcania's race forſook their fruitful clime
Dark with the verdure of expanding oaks,
To Ceres dear and Bacchus. There the corn
Bent by its golden burthen ſheds unreap'd
Its plenteous ſeed impregnating the ſoil
With future harveſts; while the bees reſide
Among th' intwining branches of the groves,
Where with their labours they enrich the leaves,
Which flow with ſweetneſs. Next, Aſſyria's ſons
Their brazen helms diſplay, th' unſkilful work
Of rude Barbarians. Thick-wove flax defends
Their cheſt and loins. A buckler guards their arm.
Girt with a falchion each a mace ſuſtains
O'erlaid with iron. On Euphrates' banks
In Babylon's ſtupendous walls they dwell,
And o'er the plains, where once with mightier tow'rs
Old Ninus rear'd its head, th' imperial ſeat
Of eldeſt tyrants. Theſe Chaldæa joins,
The land of ſhepherds. On the paſtures wide
There Belus firſt diſcern'd the various courſe
Of heav'n's bright planets, and the cluſt'ring ſtars
With names diſtinguiſh'd, whence himſelf was deem'd
The chief of Gods. His heav'n-aſcending fane

In Babylon the proud Aſſyrians rais'd.
Drawn from the fertile ſoil, which Ochus laves,
The Bactrians ſtood, like Perſia's bands attir'd,
Though leſs their jav'lins, and their bows of cane;
The Paricanians next all rough with hides
Of ſhaggy goats, with bows and daggers arm'd.
Alike in horrid garb the Caſpian train
From barren mountains, and the dreary coaſt,
Which bounds the ſtormy lake, that bears their name,
With cany bows, and ſcymetars were led.
The Indians then a threefold band appear'd.
Part guide the horſe, and part the rapid car;
The reſt on foot within the bending cane
For ſlaughter held their iron-pointed reeds.
Theſe o'er the Indus from the diſtant floods
Of Ganges paſs'd, and left a region lov'd
By laviſh Nature. There the plenteous year
Twice crown'd with harveſts ſmiles. The honey'd ſhrub,
The cinnamon, and ſpikenard bleſs their fields.
Array'd in native wealth the warriours ſhone.
Their ears were grac'd with pendants, and their hands
Incircled wore a bracelet ſtarr'd with gems.
Theſe were the nations, who to Xerxes ſent
Their mingled aids of infantry and horſe.

Now, Muſe, recount what numbers yet untold
On foot obſcur'd the ſurface of the ſhore;
Or who in chariots, or on camels beat
The looſen'd ſand. The Parthians firſt advance,
Then weak in numbers o'er the Malian ſtrand
Far from their lonely vales, and woody hills,
Not yet renown'd for warlike ſteeds, they trod.
With them the Sogdians, Dadices arrang'd,
Gandarians, and Choraſmians, all attir'd,
Like Bactria's ſons. To theſe the Saces join,
From cold Imaüs drawn, from Oxus' waves,
And Cyra built on Iäxartes' brink,
The bound of Perſia's Empire. Wild, untam'd,
And prone to rage, their deſarts they forſook.
A bow, a falchion, and a pond'rous ax
The ſavage legions arm'd. A pointed cask
O'er each grim viſage rear'd its iron cone.
In arms, like Perſians, the Sarnges ſtood.
High as the knee their buskins ſtretch'd, and clung
Around their ham. With glowing colours dy'd
Gay ſhone their varied garments. Next are ſeen
The Pactyan, Mycian, and the Utian train
In skins of goats, all horrid. Bows they wield
Of ſpringy reed, with poniards at their ſides.

With

With ſpotted hides of leopards all array'd,
Or with the ſpoil from tawny lions torn,
In graceful range the Æthiopians ſtand
Of equal ſtature, and a beauteous frame;
Though ſcorching Phœbus had imbrown'd their face,
And curl'd their criſped locks. In ancient ſong
Renown'd for juſtice, riches they diſdain'd,
As foes to virtue. From their ſeat remote
On Nilus' verge above th' Ægyptian bound,
Forc'd by their kings' malignity and pride
Theſe friends of hoſpitality and peace,
Themſelves uninjur'd, wag'd reluctant war
Againſt a land, whoſe climate, and whoſe name
To them were ſtrange. With hardeſt ſtone they point
The rapid arrow. Bows of hideous length,
Form'd with th'elaſtic branches of the palm,
They bore, and lances arm'd with horns of goats,
And maces ſtrong with iron. Now, O Muſe,
Recite the nations, who in helmets fram'd
Of various parts, and cloſe-connected joints,
With darts and poniards, ſhields, and lances weak,
A feeble train, attend their tyrant's will,
All victims deſtin'd to imbrue with gore
The Grecian ſpears; the Paphlagonians firſt

From where Carambis with projected brows
O'erlooks the dusky Euxine wrapt in mists,
And where through flow'rs, that paint its various banks,
Parthenius flows; the Mariandynians next,
The Matienian, and the Ligyan bands,
With them the Syrian multitudes, who dwell
Near Daphne's grove, who cultivate the glebe
Wide-water'd by Orontes, who along
Th' extended ridge of Libanus are nurs'd
Among the cedars, or with foodful dates
Pluckt from the palms, whose fruitage grac'd the plain
Around Damascus: all, who bear the name
Of Cappadocians, swell the Syrian host,
With those who gather from the fragrant shrub
The aromatic balsam, and extract
Its milky juice along the lovely side
Of winding Jordan, till immers'd it sleep
Beneath the pitchy surface, which obscures
Th' Asphaltic lake. The Phrygians then advance.
To them their ancient colony is join'd,
Th' Armenian bands. These see the bursting springs
Of strong Euphrates cleave the yielding earth,
And wide in lakes expanding hide the plain.
Thence with collected waters fierce and deep

It's paſſage rending through diminiſh'd rocks
To Babylon it foams. Not ſo the wave
Of ſoft Araxes to the Caſpian glides.
But ſtealing imperceptibly it laves
The fruitful herbage of Armenia's meads.
Next, ſtrange to view, in ſimilar attire,
Though far unlike in manners to the Greeks,
Appear the Lydians. Wantonneſs and ſport
Were all their care. Beſide Cayſter's ſtream,
Or ſmooth Mæander winding ſilent by,
Or near Pactolus' wave among the vines
Of Tmolus riſing, or the wealthy tide
Of golden-ſanded Hermus they allure
The ſight enchanted with the graceful dance,
Or with melodious ſweetneſs charm the ear,
And melt to ſofteſt languiſhment the ſoul.
What to the battle's danger could incite
Theſe tender ſons of luxury? the laſh
Of their ſtern monarch urg'd their ſhiv'ring limbs
Through all the tempeſts, which enrag'd the main.
And ſhook beneath their trembling ſteps the pile,
That join'd the Aſian and the weſtern worlds.
To theſe Mæonia hot with ſulph'rous mines
Unites her troops. No tree adorns their fields

Unbleſs'd with verdure, and with aſhes ſtrewn.
Black are the rocks, and ev'ry hill deform'd
With conflagration. Helmets preſs'd their brows.
Two darts they brandiſh'd. Round their woolly veſt
A ſword was girt, and hairy hides compos'd
Their bucklers round and light. The Myſians left
Olympus wood-envelop'd, and the ſoil
Waſh'd by Caïcus, and the baneful tide
Of Lycus, nurſe of Serpents. Targets, helms,
And wooden javelins harden'd in the flames
They bore. By theſe, imbattled next are ſeen
An ancient nation, who in early times,
By Trojan arms aſſail'd, their native land
Eſteem'd leſs dear than freedom, and exchang'd
Their ſeat on Strymon, where in Thrace it pours
Its freezing current, for the diſtant ſhores
Of fiſhy Sangar. Theſe Bithynians nam'd
Their habitations to the ſacred feet
Of Dindymus extend. Yet there they groan'd
Beneath oppreſſion, and their freedom mourn'd
On Sangar now, as once on Strymon loſt.
The ruddy skins of foxes form'd their cask;
Their ſhields were faſhion'd like the horned moon;
A dart, and ſlender poniard arm'd their hands;

A veſt embrac'd their bodies, while abroad
Ting'd with unnumber'd hues a mantle flow'd.
But other Thracians, who their former name
Retain'd in Aſia, ſtood with ſhining helms.
The horns of bulls in imitating braſs
Adorn'd the lofty creſt. Phœnician cloth
Their legs infolds, with brighteſt purple ſtain'd;
And through the foreſt wont to chaſe the boar,
A hunter's ſpear they graſp. What nations ſtill
On either ſide of Xerxes, while he paſs'd,
Preſent their huge array, and ſwell his ſoul
With more than mortal pride? The num'rous train
Of Moſchians and Macronians now ſucceed,
And Moſynœcians, who, with berries fed,
In wooden tow'rs along the Pontic ſhore
Repoſe their painted limbs; the mirthful race
Of Tibarenians next, whoſe wanton minds
Delight in ſport, and laughter: all in casks
Of wood, with ſhields, and lances ſmall, whoſe points
Beyond proportion lengthen. Then approach,
In garments o'er their ſpacious boſom claſp'd,
And part with javelins, part with Lycian bows,
A people deſtin'd in eternal verſe,
Ev'n thine, ſublime Mæonides, to live.

Theſe are the Milyans, Solymi their name
In thy celeſtial ſtrains, Piſidia's hills
Their dwelling. Once a formidable train,
They fac'd the great Bellerophon in war,
Now doom'd a more tremendous foe to meet,
Themſelves unnerv'd with bondage, and to leave
Their putrid bodies for the dogs of Greece.
Next are the Marian legions furniſh'd all
With ſhields of skins, with darts, and helmets wove
Of ſtrongeſt texture. Aria's hoſt protend
The Bactrian lance, and brace the Perſian bow,
Drawn from a region horrid all with thorn,
One hideous waſte of ſands, which mock the toil
Of patient culture; ſave one favour'd ſpot,
Which, like an iſle, emerges from the wild,
In verdure clad, and interſpers'd with vines,
Whoſe gen'rous cluſters yield a juice, that ſcorns
The injuries of Time. Yet Nature's hand
Had ſown their rocks with coral, and enrich'd
Their deſart hills with veins of ſapphirs blue,
And thoſe, whoſe azure ſparks of gold adorn.
Theſe from the turbant flame. On ev'ry neck
The coral bluſhes through the num'rous throng.
The Allarodians, and Saſperian bands
Were

Were arm'd with poniards, like the Cholchian hoſt;
Their heads were guarded with a helm of wood.
Short were their ſpears, of hides undreſs'd their ſhields.
The Cholchians march'd from Phaſis, and the ſhores,
Where once Medea fair enchantreſs ſtood,
And wondring view'd the firſt advent'rous bark,
That ſtem'd the Pontic foam. From Argo's ſide
The demigods deſcended, and repair'd
To her fell ſire's inhoſpitable walls.
His blooming graces Jaſon there diſplay'd.
With ev'ry art of eloquence divine
He claim'd the golden fleece. The virgin heard,
She gaz'd with fatal raviſhment, and lov'd.
Then to the hero ſhe reſigns her heart;
Her magic tames the brazen-footed bulls;
She lulls the ſleepleſs dragon, and to Greece
With faithleſs Jaſon wafts the radiant prize.
The Cholchians then purſu'd their ſteps with war,
And now with antient enmity inflam'd,
Or elſe compell'd by Xerxes to recal
The long-forgotten wrong, they menace Greece
With deſolation. Next in Perſian guiſe
A crowd advanc'd, who left the various iſles
In Perſia's gulph, and round Arabia known.

Some in their native topaz were adorn'd,
From Ophiodes, and Topazos ſprung;
And ſome with ſhells of tortoiſes, which brood
Around Caſitis' verge. To them were join'd
Thoſe, who reſide, where Erythras intomb'd
Lies all beſet with palms, a pow'rful king,
Who nam'd of old the Erythræan main.
The Libyans next are plac'd. In chariots ſcyth'd
They ſat terrific, cloath'd in skins, with darts
Of wood well-temper'd in the hardning flames.
Not Libya's deſerts from tyrannic ſway
Could hide her ſons; much leſs could freedom dwell
Amid the plenty of Arabia's fields:
Where ſpicy caſſia, and the fragrant reed,
And myrrh, and hallow'd frankincenſe perfume
The zephir's wing. A bow of largeſt ſize
Th' Arabians wield, and o'er their lucid veſt
Looſe floats a mantle on their ſhoulder claſp'd.
Of theſe two myriads on the lofty back
Of camels rode, that match'd the ſwifteſt horſe.
Such were the numbers, which from Aſia led
Bow'd down with low proſtration to the wheels
Of Xerxes' chariot. Yet what legions more
Expand their mighty range? What banners ſtill

The

The Malian ſands o'erſhadow? Forward rolls
The regal car through nations, which in arms,
And order'd ranks unlike the eaſtern throng
Upheld the ſpear and buckler. Yet untaught
To bend the ſervile knee erect they ſtood;
Unleſs that mourning o'er the ſhameful weight
Of their new bondage ſome their brows depreſs'd,
And ſtain'd their arms with ſorrow. Europe's race
Were theſe, whom Xerxes by reſiſtleſs force
Had gather'd to his ſtandards. Murm'ring here
The ſons of Thrace, and Macedonia ſtood,
Here on his ſteed the brave Theſſalian frown'd.
There pin'd reluctant multitudes, who bore
The name of Greeks, and peopled all the coaſt
Between Byzantium, and the Malian bay.

THROUGH all the numbers, which ador'd his pride,
Or fear'd his pow'r, the monarch now was paſs'd;
Nor yet among thoſe myriads could be found
One, who with Xerxes' ſelf in tow'ring ſize,
Or beauteous features might compare. O wretch!
Poſſeſs'd of all, but virtue; doom'd to ſhew,
How mean without her is unbounded pow'r,
The charm of beauty, and the blaze of ſtate,
How inſecure of happineſs, how vain.

Thou,

Thou, who couldſt mourn the common lot, which heav'n
From none withholds; which oft to thouſands proves
Their only refuge from a tyrant's rage;
And which by pining ſickneſs, age, or pain
Becomes at laſt a ſoothing hope to all;
Thou, who couldſt weep, that Nature's gentle hand
Should lay her wearied offſpring in the tomb,
Yet couldſt remorſeleſs from their peaceful ſeats
Lead half the nations in a clime unknown
To fall the victims of thy ruthleſs pride;
What didſt thou merit from the injur'd world?
What ſuff'rings to compenſate for the tears
Of Aſia's mothers, for unpeopled realms,
And all this waſte of nature? On his hoſt
The king exulting bends his haughty ſight,
When thus to Demaratus he began.

Now Demaratus to thy ſoul recal
My father great Darius, who receiv'd
Thy wandring ſteps expell'd their native home.
Ill would it then become thee to beguile
Thy benefactors, and the truth diſguiſe.
Look back on all thoſe thouſands, and declare,
If yonder Grecians will oppoſe their march.

The exile anſwer'd. Deem not mighty lord,
I will deceive thy goodneſs by a tale
Forg'd for their glory, whoſe deluded minds
Perverſely hearken'd to the ſland'rer's tongue;
Who forc'd me with unmerited diſgrace
To tread the paths of baniſhment and woe.
Nor be the king offended, while I ſpeak
The words of truth. The Spartans never fly.
Here with contemptuous ſmiles the king return'd.
Wilt thou, who once wert Lacedæmon's chief,
Encounter twenty Perſians? Yet thoſe Greeks
With greater diſproportion muſt confront
Our hoſt to-morrow. Demaratus thus.
By ſingle combat were the tryal vain,
And vainer ſtill by my unworthy ſword,
To prove the merit of united force,
Which oft by military ſkill ſurmounts
The ſtrength of numbers. Nor in fields of war
The Greeks excel by diſcipline alone,
But from their manners. Grant thy ear, O king,
The diff'rence learn of Grecian bands, and thine.
The flow'r, the bulwark of thy pow'rful hoſt
Are mercenaries. Theſe are canton'd round
Thy provinces. No fertile field demands

Their

Their painful hand to turn the fallow glebe.
Them to the noon-day toil no harveſt calls.
The ſtubborn oak along the mountains brow
Sinks not beneath their ſtroke. With careful eyes
They mark not how the flocks, or heifers feed.
To them of wealth, and all poſſeſſions void
The name of country with an empty ſound
Flies o'er the ear, nor warms their joyleſs hearts,
Who ſhare no country. Needy, yet with ſcorn
Rejecting labour, wretched by their wants,
Yet profligate through indolence, with limbs
Soft and enervate, and with minds corrupt;
From miſery, debauchery, and ſloth
Are theſe to battle drawn againſt a foe
Inur'd to hardſhip, and the child of toil,
Wont through the freezing ſhow'r, and wintry ſtorm
O'er his own glebe the tardy ox to goad;
Or in the ſun's impetuous heat to glow
Beneath the burthen of the yellow ſheaves:
Whence on himſelf, on her, whoſe faithful arms
Infold him joyful, and a num'rous race,
Which glads his dwelling, plenty he beſtows
With independence; and when call'd to war
For theſe his deareſt comfort, and his care,

And

And for the harveſt promis'd to his toil,
He lifts the ſhield, nor ſhuns unequal force.
Such are the pow'rs of ev'ry ſtate in Greece:
One only breeds a race more warlike ſtill,
Ev'n thoſe, who now defend that rocky paſs,
The ſons of Lacedæmon. They untaught
To break the glebe, or bind the golden ſheaves,
To far ſeverer labours are inur'd
Alone for war, their ſole delight, and care.
From infancy to manhood, are they form'd
To want, and danger, to th' unwholeſome ground,
To winter watches, and inclement ſkies,
To plunge through torrents, brave the tuſky boar,
To arms, and wounds; an exerciſe of pain
So fierce and conſtant, that to them a camp
With all its hardſhips is the ſeat of reſt,
And war itſelf remiſſion from their toils.

THY words are folly, ſcornful here replied
The Perſian monarch. Does not freedom dwell
Among the Grecians? Therefore will they ſhun
Superiour foes, for whoſoe'er is free
Will fly from danger; while the Perſians know,
If from th' allotted ſtation they retreat,
The ſcourge awaits them, and my heavy wrath.

Conceive not, Xerxes, Sparta's chief return'd,
The Grecians want an object, where to fix
Their eyes with rev'rence, and obedient dread.
To them more aweful than the name of king
To Aſia's trembling millions is the law,
Whoſe ſacred voice injoins them to confront
Unnumber'd foes, to vanquiſh, or to die.
In ſilence now the baniſh'd king remain'd.
While near the ſtraits the chariot roll'd; it chanc'd,
The Spartans then were ſtation'd out on guard.
Theſe in gymnaſtic exerciſe employ'd,
Nor heed the monarch, nor his gaudy train;
But toſs'd the ſpear, and whirl'd the rapid dart,
Or met with adverſe ſhields in ſingle war,
Or trooping ſwiftly ruſh'd on ev'ry ſide
With ranks unbroken, and with equal feet:
While others calm beneath their poliſh'd helms
Drew down their hair, which hung in ſable curls,
And ſpread their necks with terrour. Xerxes here
The exile queſtions. What do theſe intend,
Who thus with careful hands adjuſt their hair?
To whom the Spartan. O imperial lord,
Such is their cuſtom, to adorn their heads,
When with determin'd valour they preſent

Their dauntleſs breaſts before the jaws of death.
Bring down thy myriads all in glitt'ring ſteel,
Arm, if thou canſt, the gen'ral race of man;
All, who poſſeſs the regions unexplor'd
Beyond the Ganges, all, whoſe wand'ring ſteps
Behind the Caſpian range the Scythian wild,
With thoſe, who drink the ſecret fount of Nile,
Yet to the breaſts of Sparta's ſons ſhall fear
Be ſtill a ſtranger. Thus with fervour ſpake
The exil'd king, when guſhing from his eyes
Reſiſtleſs grief o'erflow'd his cheek. Aſide
His head he turn'd, and wept in copious ſtreams.
The ſad remembrance of his former ſtate,
His dignity, his greatneſs, and the ſight
Of thoſe brave ranks, which thus unſhaken ſtood,
And ſpread amazement through the world in arms,
Excite thoſe ſorrows. Oft with eager eyes
He views the godlike warriours, who beneath
His ſtandard once victorious fought, who call'd
Him once their king and leader. Then again
His head he bows with anguiſh, and bedews
His breaſt with tears; in agony bemoans
His faded honours, his illuſtrious name
Forgotten now, his majeſty defil'd

With

With exile and dependence. So obſcur'd
By creeping ivy, and by ſordid moſs
Some lordly palace, or ſtupendous fane,
Magnificent in ruin ſtands; where time
Wide-waſting from the nodding roof hath mow'd
The column down, and cleft the pond'rous dome.

Not unobſerv'd by Hyperanthes mourn'd
Th' unhappy Spartan. Kindly to his own
Th' exile's hand he joins, and thus humane.
O Demaratus, this thy grief confirms,
How well the Greeks deſerve thy gen'rous praiſe,
Who ſtill repining doſt their loſs deplore,
Though cheriſh'd here with univerſal love.
But O let indignation in thy breaſt
Revive thy wrongs! then bleſs th' auſpicious fate,
Which led thee far from calumny and fraud
To ſhare the favour of the higheſt king.

As Demaratus with a grateful mind
Addreſs'd himſelf to anſwer, Perſia's king
Thus interrupted. Soon, as morning ſhines,
Do thou Tigranes and Phraortes head
The Medes and Saces. Bring thoſe Grecians bound.
This ſaid. The monarch to his tent return'd.

End of the Third Book.

LEONIDAS.

BOOK IV.

The Argument.

Leonidas riſing by break of day commands a body of Arcadians, with the Theſpians, and Platæans to be drawn out for battle in that part of Thermopylæ, which lay under the Phocian wall, from whence he harangues them. The enemy approaches. Diomedon kills Tigranes in ſingle combat. Both armies join battle. Dithyrambus kills Phraortes. The Perſians, entirely defeated, are purſued with great ſlaughter by Diomedon and Dithyrambus to the extremity of the paſs. The Grecian commanders after the purſuit retire for refreſhment to a cave in the ſide of mount Oeta. Leonidas recals them to the camp, and ſends down freſh forces. Diomedon, and Dithyrambus, with the Platæans are permitted to continue in the field. By the advice of Diomedon the Grecians advance to the broadeſt part of Thermopylæ, where they form a line of thirty in depth, conſiſting of the Platæans, Mantinéans, Tegæans, Thebans, Corinthians, Phliaſians, and Mycenæans. The attack is renew'd with great violence by Hyperanthes, Abrocomes, and the principal Perſian leaders at the head of ſome choſen troops.

LACONIA's

LACONIA's leader with the morning roſe,
When thus to Alpheus. From Arcadia's bands
Select a thouſand ſpears. To theſe unite
The Theſpians and Platæans. Range their lines
Before the wall, which fortifies the paſs:
There cloſe-imbodied will their might repulſe
The num'rous foe. Obedient to his will
Th' appointed legions iſſuing from their tents
With deep'ning ranks Leonidas incloſe.
So round their monarch in his ſtormy cave
The winds aſſemble, from his ſable throne
When Æolus ſends forth his dread command
To ſwell the main, or heav'n with clouds deform,
Or bend the foreſt from the mountain's brow.
The chief of Sparta from the rampart's height
Thus to the fight the liſt'ning hoſt inflames.

THIS day, O Grecians, countrymen, and friends,
Your wives, your offspring, your paternal ſeats,
Your fathers, country, liberty, and laws
Have ſent you hither, from your infant age
Vers'd in the various diſcipline of Mars,
Laborious, active, virtuous, brave, and free,
To match your valour with ignoble foes

In war unſkilful, nature's baſeſt droſs,
The foes of all utility and worth,
And thence a monarch's mercenary ſlaves;
With ſpirits broke by ſervitude and want,
With limbs relax'd by ſloth, and wanton eaſe,
With minds debauch'd by vices, uninſpir'd
By all th' indearing cares in free-born hearts,
Who cold and drooping fight without a cauſe,
To whom defeat is neither grief, nor ſhame,
Who ſeek no fruit from victory, but ſpoil.
Theſe are the flow'r of Aſia's hoſt. The reſt,
Who fill their boaſted numbers, are a croud
Forc'd from their dwellings to the bloody field,
From whom till now with jealous care their lord
Has ſtill withheld the inſtruments of war.
Theſe are the people taught with patient grief
To bear the rapine, cruelty, and ſpurns
Of Xerxes' mercenary bands, and pine
In ſervitude to ſlaves. With terrour ſounds
The trumpet's clangor in their trembling ears.
Unwonted loads, the buckler and the lance
Their hands ſuſtain incumber'd, and preſent
The mockery of war.———But ev'ry eye
Flames with impatient ardour, and your breaſts

Too long their ſwelling ſpirit have confin'd.
Go then, ye ſons of Liberty, and ſweep
Theſe bondmen from the field. Reſiſtleſs rend
The glitt'ring ſtandard from their ſervile hands.
Hurl to the ground their ignominious heads
The warriours helm profaning. Think the ſhades
Of your forefathers rear their ſacred brows
Here to enjoy the glory of their ſons.

He ſpake. Loud Pæans burſt from all the hoſt.
With fierce reply unnumber'd ſhouts aſcend
From hoſtile nations thronging down the paſs.
Such is the roar of Ætna, when her mouth
Diſplodes combuſtion from her ſulph'rous depths,
And blaſts the ſmiles of Nature. Dauntleſs ſtood
In deep array before the Phocian wall
The Greeks cloſe-wedg'd with implicated ſhields,
And ſpears protended, like the graceful range
Of arduous elms, whoſe interwoven boughs
Before ſome rural palace wide expand
Their venerable umbrage to retard
The North's impetuous wing. As o'er the main
In lucid rows the riſing waves reflect
The ſun's effulgence, ſo the Grecian helms
Return'd his light, which o'er their convex pour'd,

And ſcatter'd ſplendour on the dancing plumes.
Down ruſh'd the foe. Exulting in the van
Their haughty leader ſhakes his threatning lance,
And frowns defiance. Burſting from his rank
Diomedon with inſtant fury fac'd
Th' impending foes. Meantime he loudly calls
Their chief Tigranes, whom he thus defies.
Now thou art met, Barbarian. Wouldſt thou prove
Thy actions equal to thy vaunts, command
Thy troops to halt, while thou and I engage.
Tigranes turning to the Perſians ſpake.
My friends, and ſoldiers, check your ardent haſte,
While my ſtrong lance yon Grecian's pride confounds.
He ceas'd. In dreadful oppoſition now
Each combatant advanc'd. With ſinewy hand
They gripe their ſpears high-brandiſh'd. Thrice they drove
With well-directed force the pointed ſteel
At either's throat, and thrice their ſhields repel
The deſtin'd wound. At length the Eaſtern chief
With all his pow'rs collected for the ſtroke
His javelin rivets in the Grecian targe.
Aſide Diomedon inclines, and ſhuns
Approaching fate. Then all his martial skill
Undaunted ſummons. His forſaken lance

Beſide him caſt, his falchion he unſheaths.
The blade deſcending on Tigranes' arm,
That inſtant ſtruggling to redeem his ſpear,
The ſhiv'ring hand diſſevers. Pale affright
Unmans the Perſian, while his active foe
Full on his neck diſcharg'd the rapid ſword,
And open'd wide the purple gates of life.
Low ſinks Tigranes in eternal ſhade.
The conqueror beſtrides the proſtrate dead,
Then in the clotted ringlets of the hair
His hand intwining from the bleeding trunk
The head disjoin'd, and whirl'd with ſudden rage
Amid the hoſtile numbers. All with dread
Recoil, where'er the ghaſtly viſage flew
In ſanguine circles, and purſu'd its track
Of horrour through the air. Not leſs amaz'd
A barb'rous nation, whom the chearful dawn
Of ſcience ne'er illumin'd, view on high
A meteor waving with portentous blaze;
Where oft, as ſuperſtition vainly dreams,
Some dæmon ſits amid the baneful fires,
Diſperſing plagues and deſolation round.
A while the ſtern Diomedon remains
Triumphant o'er the dire diſmay, which froze

The hearts of Perſia, then with haughty port,
And ſullen joy among his gladſome friends
Reſumes his ſtation. Still the Aſian bands
With conſternation motionleſs behold
Their foes with terrour, and ſuſpend the fight;
When thus Phraortes animates their breaſts.

HEAV'NS! can one leader's death appal this hoſt,
Which counts a train of monarchs for its chiefs!
Behold Phraortes! from Imaüs' ridge
I draw my ſubject files. With hardy toil
I through the pathleſs foreſt have explor'd
The tiger's cavern. This unconquer'd arm
Hath from the lion rent the ſhaggy ſpoil.
So through this field of ſlaughter will I chaſe
Yon vaunting Greek with ruin on his head
For great Tigranes ſlain. His words revive
The flame of valour through the drooping van,
Then on the rear he brandiſhes his lance.
Before him ſhrink th' affrighted croud, and roll
Their numbers headlong on the Grecian ſteel
With looſe arrangement, and uncertain feet.
Thus with his trident Ocean's angry God
From its vaſt bottom turns the hideous maſs
Of waters upward, and o'erwhelms the beach.

Terrific ſtood the fierce Platæan chief
Amid the Grecian van. His ample targe,
Like a ſtrong bulwark, prominent he rais'd
Before the line. There thunder'd all the ſtorm
Of darts and arrows. His undaunted train
With emulating ardour charge the foe.
Where'er they turn the formidable ſpears,
Which drench'd the glebe of Marathon with gore,
The Perſians heap the plain. Diomedon
Leads on the ſlaughter. From his nodding creſt
The ſable plumes ſhook terrour. Aſia's bands
All ſhudder backward at the dreadful beams
Of that unconquerable ſword, which falls
With lightning's ſwiftneſs o'er their trembling heads,
And reeking ſtill with ſlain Tigranes' blood
Their ſhatter'd ranks o'erturns. The furious chief
Incompaſs'd round with carnage, and beſmear'd
With ſanguine drops, inflames his warlike friends.
O Dithyrambus! let thy deeds this day
Surmount their wonted luſtre! Thou in arms,
Demophilus, worn grey, thy youth recal!
Behold theſe ſlaves without reſiſtance bleed.
Advance, my ancient friend. Propitious Fame

Smiles

Smiles on thy years, and gives thy aged hand
To pluck freſh laurels for thy honour'd brow.
As, when indu'd with Promethéan heat,
The molten clay reſpir'd; with ſudden warmth
So glows the venerable Theſpian's age,
With new-born vigour ev'ry ſinew ſwells.
His falchion thund'ring on Cheraſmes' helm
The forehead clove. Ecbatana to war
Sent forth Cheraſmes. From her potent gates
He proud in hope her ſwarming numbers led,
With Ariazus and Peuceſtes join'd,
His martial brothers. They attend his doom
By Dithyrambus foil'd. Their hoary ſire
Shall o'er his ſolitary palace roam,
Lamenting loud his childleſs years, and curſe
Ambition's fury, and the luſt of war,
Then pining bow with anguiſh to the grave.
Next by the fierce Platæan's matchleſs ſword
Expires Damates, once the hoſt and friend
Of fall'n Tigranes; him that day he join'd,
And left his native bands. Of Syrian birth
In Daphne he reſided near the grove,
Whoſe hoſpitable laurels in their ſhade
Conceal'd the virgin fugitive, that ſcorn'd

Th' embrace of Phœbus; hither ſhe repair'd
Far from her parent ſtream, in fables feign'd
Herſelf a laurel to have rear'd her head
With verdant bloom in this retreat, the grove
Of Daphne call'd, the ſeat of rural bliſs,
Fan'd by the wing of zephirs, and with rills
Of bubbling founts irriguous, Syria's boaſt,
And happy rival of Theſſalia's vale;
Now hid for ever from Damates' eyes.
Nor with unactive ſpears th' Arcadians ſtood.
Gigantic Clonius unreſiſted preſs'd
The yielding Perſians, who before him ſunk,
Cruſh'd like vile ſtubble underneath the ſteps
Of ſome glad hind, who viſits o'er the plain
His new-ſhorn harveſt. With a fearleſs eye
Phraortes ſaw the gen'ral rout. He ſprung
O'er hills of carnage to confront the Greeks,
Reproaching thus his own inglorious friends.

FLY then ye cowards, and deſert your chief;
Yet ſingle here my falchion ſhall oppoſe
The might of thouſands. Raging thus, he drove
The deathful ſteel through Ariſtander's breaſt.
Him Dithyrambus lov'd, a ſacred bard
Rever'd for juſtice, for his verſe renown'd,

Which ſung the deeds of heroes, thoſe who fell,
Or thoſe, who conquer'd in their country's cauſe,
Th' inraptur'd ſoul inſpiring with the thirſt
Of glory won by virtue. His high ſtrain
The Muſes favour'd from their neighb'ring groves,
And bleſs'd with heav'nly melody his lyre.
No more from Theſpia ſhall his feet aſcend
The ſhady ſteep of Helicon. No more
The ſtreams divine of Aganippe's fount
His tuneful lip ſhall moiſten, nor his hands
Preſent their off'rings in the Muſes bow'r,
The proſtrate ſhield and unforſaken lance
Now feebly graſping, never more to ſwell
His lofty numbers on the ſounding ſtring.
Lo! Dithyrambus weeps. Amid the rage
Of war and conqueſt a ſwift-guſhing tear
Finds one ſad moment's interval to fall
On his pale friend. But ſoon the victor proves
His fierce revenge. Through ſhield and corſelet plung'd,
His furious javelin tore the Perſian's cheſt.
Phraortes ſinks, nor yet expiring, ſees
With indignation Perſia's myriads fly.
Swift through their broken legions, ſide by ſide,
Urg'd by the voice of Victory and Fame,

Diomedon and Dithyrambus rang'd.
So, where Alphéus heard the rattling car,
And ſounding hoofs along his echoing banks,
Two gen'rous courſers link'd in mutual reins
With equal ſpeed and ardour beat the duſt
To reach the glories of th' Olympic goal.

THIS from his lofty chariot Xerxes ſaw.
He ſaw his numbers pouring from the ſtraits
In crouded flight, then ſpreading o'er the field,
All broke and ſcatter'd; as a river burſts
Impetuous from its fountain, then expands
Its limpid ſurface o'er the paſtures broad.
Thrice ſtarted from his ſeat th' aſtoniſh'd king,
Shame, fear, and indignation rend his breaſt;
As ruin irreſiſtible were near
To overwhelm his millions. Haſte (he calls
To Hyperanthes) haſte and meet the Greeks;
Their daring rage and inſolence repel,
And from diſhonour vindicate our name.

THE godlike Hyperanthes through the tents
Obedient moves. Deliberate and brave
Each active prince he ſummons, and with care
Collects the hardieſt troops. Around him ſoon

Innumerable javelins flame. His voice
Demands attention, when he thus began.
Now friends divide, and form two equal bands.
One with the great Abrocomes, with me,
With Intaphernes, and Hydarnes bold,
With Mindus and Pandates ſhall advance,
And ſnatch this ſhort-liv'd victory from Greece.
You Abradates with Pharnuchus join'd,
Orontes, and Mazæus, keep the reſt
Imbattel'd ready to impart their aid,
Shou'd envious Fate exhauſt our num'rous ranks;
For, O great Mithra, may thy radiant eye
Ne'er ſee us, yielding to ignoble flight,
The Perſian fame diſhonour, and the praiſe
Of our renown'd progenitors, who led
By Cyrus gave a monarch to the world.
Think, O ye princes, flow'r of Aſia's realms,
What endleſs infamy will blaſt your names,
Should Greece, that narrow portion of the globe,
Your arms defy; when Babylon hath low'r'd
Its tow'ring head, when Lydia's pride is quell'd,
And from Ecbatana its empire torn.
Think too, ye warlike bands, our army's boaſt,
What deeds are ask'd from your ſuperiour ſwords;

You, who our monarch's largeſt bounty ſhare,
You, to whoſe faith and valour he commits
Himſelf, his queens, his realms, and now his fame.
WHILE Hyperanthes marſhall'd thus his hoſt,
Far as th' extremeſt limit of the paſs,
Diomedon and Dithyrambus hung
Upon the rear of Perſia. Now they turn
Victorious, ſtriding o'er th' impurpled heaps
Of arms, and mangled dead, themſelves with gore
Diſtain'd; like two grim tigers, who have forc'd
A nightly manſion on the deſart rais'd
By ſome lone-wandring traveller, and dy'd
With human ſlaughter through the foreſt deep
Back to their covert's dreary gloom retire.
So paſs'd theſe heroes o'er the crimſon rock,
Approaching now, where gaſping on his ſhield
Phraortes lay recumbent. Theſpia's youth
Advancing, thus his gen'rous ſoul expreſs'd.
LIV'ST thou, brave Perſian? By propitious Jove,
From whom the pleaſing ſenſe of mercy flows
Through mortal boſoms, leſs my ſoul rejoic'd,
When Fortune gave the victory before
Than now to raiſe thee from this field of death.

THE

THE dying
And thus with
To proffer me,
The day is nov
Nor ſhall my
Thy mercy,
HE ceas'd.
Demophilus dr
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ALAS! how
Had Juſtice gi
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THE dying prince his languid ſight unclos'd,
And thus with trembling lips. Vain man, forbear
To proffer me, what ſoon thyſelf muſt crave.
The day is now extinguiſh'd in theſe orbs,
Nor ſhall my heart beat longer than to ſcorn
Thy mercy, Grecian; then reſign to fate.
HE ceas'd. The great, and haughty ſpirit fled.
Demophilus drew nigh. The hoary chief
Long o'er Phraortes' corſe his head inclin'd,
Poiz'd on his lance, and thus addreſs'd the ſlain.
ALAS! how glorious were that bleeding breaſt,
Had Juſtice giv'n the buckler to thy arm,
And to preſerve a people bade thee die!
Who now ſhall mourn thee! Thy ungrateful king
Will ſoon forget thy worth. For thee no tears
Among thy native countrymen ſhall tell
The public ſorrow; what to them avail'd
Thy might and dauntleſs ſpirit? Not to guard
Their wives and offſpring from the ſpoil of war,
Not from their walls repel the hoſtile blaze,
Nor deſolation from their fruitful fields,
But to extend oppreſſion didſt thou fall;
Perhaps with inborn virtues in thy heart,
Which, but thy angry deſtiny forbade,

By freedom cheriſh'd might have bleſs'd mankind.
All-bounteous Nature! thy impartial laws
To no ſelected race of men confine
The ſenſe of glory, fortitude, and all
The nobler paſſions, which inſpire the mind,
And render life illuſtrious. Theſe thou plant'ſt
In ev'ry ſoil. But freedom, like the ſun,
Muſt warm the gen'rous ſeeds. By her alone
They bloom and flouriſh; while oppreſſion blaſts
The tender virtues: hence a ſpurious growth,
Falſe honour, ſavage valour taint the ſoul,
And wild ambition: hence rapacious pow'r
The ravag'd earth unpeoples, and the brave,
A feaſt for dogs, beſtrew th' inſanguin'd plain.

He ſaid. Around the venerable man
The Grecians throng'd attentive. Conqueſt huſh'd
It's joyful tranſports. O'er the horrid field,
Late the rude ſcene of tumult, all was calm.
So, when the ſong of Thracian Orpheus drew
To Hebrus' margin from their dreary ſeats
The ſavage race, which Hæmus wrapt in clouds,
Pangæus cold, and Rhodopeian ſnows
In blood and diſcord nurs'd; the ſoothing ſtrain
Flow'd with enchantment through their raviſh'd ears:

Their

Their fierceneſs melted, and amaz'd they learn'd
The ſacred laws of juſtice, which the bard
Mix'd with the muſick of his heav'nly ſtring.

Not from the field of ſlaughter far remote
In Oeta's rugged ſide had Nature clove
A rocky cavern. This with moſs ſhe ſpread,
And o'er the entrance downward from the roots
She hung the ſhaggy trunks of branching firrs
To heav'n's hot ray impervious. From the ſides
The vivid laurel ſpread before the ſun
Its broad and glitt'ring foliage; and, above,
The hill was darken'd with a ſolemn ſhade
Caſt from the ſable cypreſs. This retreat
Cool, as the grot of Thetis, hid beneath
The vaulted ocean, with the murm'ring ſound
Of waters trickling from the riven ſtone
The Grecian leaders to its gloom invites.
Their helms they looſen from their glowing cheeks.
Againſt the rock their bucklers they repoſe.
Propt on their ſpears they ſtood, when Agis thus,
Sent by Leonidas, accoſts the chiefs.

O Ever-worthy of undying names!
Leonidas recals you from your toil,
Which has already fill'd our mouths with praiſe,

Our

Our eyes with wonder, that from yonder tow'r
On your unequall'd deeds inceſſant gaz'd.
To whom the bold Diomedon return'd.
Go Agis, ſay to Lacedæmon's king,
As yet untir'd my hand can poize the ſpear,
Nor hangs the buckler heavy on my arm.
And ſhall I then retire? And once again
Shall not the ſun, before he ſink, behold
The ſlaves of Xerxes tremble at my lance.
To him the Theſpian youth. My friend and guide
To noble actions, ſince thy gen'rous mind
Intent on fame diſdains to reſt, O grant,
I too thy glorious labours may partake,
And learn once more to imitate thy deeds.
Thou, gentleſt Agis, Sparta's chief, intreat
Not to command us from the field of war.
Then interpos'd Demophilus. O friend,
And thou, lov'd offspring of the deareſt man,
Who doſt reſtore my brother to my eyes,
My ſoul your magnanimity applauds.
But, O reflect, that unabating toil
Subdues the mightieſt. Valour then will ſigh,
When the weak hand obeys the heart no more.
Yet I declining with the weight of years

Will not aſſign a meaſure to your ſtrength;
If ſtill you find your vigour undecay'd,
Stay and augment your glory. So, when time
Your heads ſhall whiten, and your feeble arms
Round the high temple's peaceful vault have hung
Their conſecrated ſhields, your native land
Shall then with honours doubled on your age
Requite the gen'rous labours of your prime.
So ſpake the Senior, and forſook the cave.

Now from the bubbling ſpring Diomedon
Receives the waters in his concave helm;
And thus addreſs'd the genius of the flood.

Whoe'er thou art, whoſe deity preſides
O'er this fair fountain, bounteous are thy ſtreams;
Though ill ſhall I repay thee: for again
Will I this day pollute thy ſilver wave,
Which mix'd with gore ſhall tinge the Malian ſurge.

So ſaying from his brimming cask he quaff'd
The clear, refreſhing moiſture. Thus repairs
The ſpotted panther to Hydaſpes' ſide,
Or eaſtern Indus, feaſted with the blood
Of ſome torn deer, which nigh his cruel graſp
Had roam'd unheeding through the ſecret grove:
Rapacious o'er the humid brink he ſtoops,

And in the pure and fluid cryſtal cools
His reeking jaws. The Theſpian warriour here.
SEE, valiant friend, Leonidas hath fill'd
The paſs with freſh battalions. O ſurvey
Yon line of plumed helms, and glitt'ring ſhields,
Which emulate the mid-day ſun. What joy!
What ardent hope enlightens ev'ry face!
O let us wait no longer, leſt they cry,
Our wearied limbs retard us. Let us arm,
And take our ſtation in the glorious van.
THUS Dithyrambus. The Platæan chief
Approves the counſel, and reſumes his arms.
Them as a ſplendid recompence he bore
From grateful Athens, when his conqu'ring ſword
Her domes with great Miltiades redeem'd
From Aſiatic flames. Th' inſculptur'd helm
Now preſs'd his manly temples. From on high
A fourfold plumage nodded, and, beneath,
A golden dragon with effulgent ſcales
The gorgeous creſt illumin'd. On his arm
His ſhield he brac'd. Gorgonian ſerpents twin'd
Around the ſpacious verge. Within, the form
Of Pallas, martial goddeſs, was impreſs'd.
Low, as her feet, the graceful tunic flow'd.

Betwixt

Betwixt two gryffins on her helmet ſat
A ſphinx with wings expanded, while the face
Of dire Meduſa on her boſom frown'd.
One hand ſupports her javelin, which confounds
The pride of kings; the other leads along
A blooming virgin, Victory, whoſe brows
A crown incircles; laurels ſhe preſents;
But from her ſhoulders all her plumes were ſhorn,
With favour'd Athens ever now to reſt.
This, Aſia's terrour, on his mighty arm
Diomedon uprear'd, then ſnatch'd his lance,
And thus to Dithyrambus. Lo! my friend,
Alone of all the Grecians, who ſuſtain'd
The morning's battle, ſtill unwearied ſtand
Platæa's ſons, and well may keep the field,
They, who endur'd the Marathonian toil.
Then charge with us. Amid the foremoſt rank
Thy valour ſhall be plac'd, and ſhare, this day,
Command and honour with Platæa's chief.
THE hero ceas'd, and tow'rd the Grecian van
Strides with impetuous ſteps. Nor ſlow behind
The boaſt of Theſpia, Dithyrambus mov'd;
Like blooming Hermes in celeſtial arms,
When lightly graceful with his feather'd feet

Along

Along Scamander's flow'ry verge he paſs'd,
To aid th' incens'd divinities of Greece
Againſt the Phrygian tow'rs. With eager ſpeed
The heroes ſoon th' imbattled Greeks attain'd,
To whom the brave Diomedon began.

NOT to contend, but vanquiſh are you come,
And in the blood of fugitives to ſtain
Your lances unoppos'd. My friends, behold,
Where furtheſt from the Malian gulf remov'd
The crags of Oeta leſs confine the ſtraits:
There let us bend extending wide our front.
There with more ample ſcope may havock range.

ALL with aſſent gave ear. The various bands
Move on ſucceſſive. The Platæans firſt
Againſt the rock are ſtation'd. To their head
Is Dithyrambus brought. Exulting joy
Diſtends their hearts, and flaſhes in their eyes.
Thanks to the great Diomedon, they cry,
Who to our troop this godlike hero joins.
Hail! Dithyrambus. Hail! illuſtrious chief.
Well doſt thou merit to have reap'd renown
At Marathon. Amid the glorious front
With conſcious gladneſs bluſhing on his cheek
The youth his poſt aſſumes. Around him croud

The

The hoary warriours their unnumber'd ſcars
Before his ſight preſenting, and recount
Their various dangers. He their wounds ſurveys
With veneration, nor diſdains to hear
The oft-repeated tale. From Sparta's king
Returning, Agis here the chiefs addreſs'd,
Leonidas permits you ſtill to brave
The hoſtile numbers, with Platæa's band,
If yet by toil unconquer'd. But I ſee,
That all unwearied aſk the promis'd fight.
Hail! glorious veterans. This ſignal day
May your victorious ſwords augment the wreaths
Around your venerable brows, and make
Thermopylæ, like Marathon, renown'd.
THIS ſaid, he haſtens back. Mean time advanc'd
The Mantinéan Diophantus brave,
And Hegeſander, Tegea's dauntleſs chief,
With all their troops imbattled; by their ſide
The Thebans form; to them their native files
Alcmæon and Eupalamus unite;
Laſt on the margin of the Malian bay
Mycenæ's youth Ariſtobulus drew;
In one impenetrable phalanx ſtretch'd
Acroſs the paſs. With cloſe-connected force

An hundred warriours form'd th' expanded ranks,
And thirty bucklers ev'ry file condens'd.
In ſtrong reſerve Dieneces behind
Diſpos'd the Spartans, and the Locrian line.
There too with Maron Alpheus dauntleſs ſtood,
And godlike Agis. There Megiſtias plac'd
His blooming heir, and thus his valour fires.

O MENALIPPUS! born of foreign race,
Yet by theſe heroes not unworthy deem'd.
With them to fight for Sparta! lo! the hour
Is come, my ſon, to ſhew thy gen'rous heart;
That not with thee the buckler and the ſpear
Are ill intruſted to maintain a cauſe
So great and ſacred. O remember well,
Leonidas on yonder bulwark ſtands,
Who all the war contemplates, and diſcerns
The bold and fearful. O propitious heav'n!
Grant me to hear Leonidas this day,
Applaud my ſon, and let Megiſtias die!

WHILE thus he ſpake, the animated ſoul
Of Menalippus ſtruggling in his breaſt
Demands the fight. This ſaw the tender ſire,
And thus with tears rejoin'd. Remember too!
Thy father ſees thy danger. Oh! my child!

To me thy honour as to thee is dear;
Yet court not death! By all thy filial love,
By all my cares and fondneſs I implore!
Amid the combat, or the warm purſuit,
Still by the wiſe Dieneces abide:
His prudent valour knows th' unerring paths
Of glory; he will guide thy youthful ſteps.
This ſaid, to Sparta's leader he retires.
Now are the enemies deſcried. The van
Abrocomes and Hyperanthes led,
With them Pandates, Intaphernes proud,
Hydarnes, Mindus. Violent their march
With ſounding footſteps ſwept the ſtony way.
So, where th' unequal globe in mountains ſwells,
A river pours its thund'ring ſurge between
The ſteep-erected cliffs; tumultuous roll
The torrents burſting o'er the pointed crags:
The mountains roar, the marble channel foams.
With obvious arms th' intrepid Greeks withſtand
The dire encounter. Soon th' impetuous ſhock
Of thouſands and of myriads ſhakes the ground.
Stupendous ſcene of terrour! Under hills,
Whoſe nodding ſummits vaulted o'er their heads,
In unextinguiſhable fury join'd

The dreadful conflict. With inverted trunks
Obliquely bending from the ſhagged ridge
The ſylvan horrours overſhade the fight.
The ſhrill-mouth'd trumpet, and the deep-tun'd horn,
Mix'd with the craſh of intermingling ſpears,
The clanging ſhields, and war's diſcordant ſhouts
Awake the echoes through the neighb'ring groves;
And rocks and ſhores return the hideous ſound.

End of the Fourth Book.

LEONIDAS

LEONIDAS:

BOOK V.

The Argument.

Hyperanthes diſcontinuing the fight, while he waits for reinforcements, Teribazus, a Perſian remarkable for his merit and learning, and highly belov'd by Hyperanthes, but unhappy in his paſſion for Ariana, a daughter of Darius, advances from the reſt of the army to the reſcue of a friend in diſtreſs, who lay wounded on the field of battle. Teribazus, is attack'd by Diophantus, the Mantinéan, whom he overcomes, then engaging with Dithyrambus, is himſelf ſlain. Hyperanthes haſtens to his ſuccour. A general battle enſues. Hyperanthes and Abrocomes, partly by their own valour, and partly by the perfidy of the Thebans, who deſert the line, being on the point of forcing the Grecians, are repuls'd by the Lacedæmonians. Hyperanthes compoſes a ſelect body out of the Perſian ſtanding forces, and making an improvement in their diſcipline renews the attack; upon which Leonidas changes the diſpoſition of his army: Hyperanthes and the ableſt Perſian generals are driven out of the field, and ſeveral thouſands of the Barbarians, circumvented in the paſs, are entirely deſtroy'd.

AMID

AMID the van of Perſia was a youth
Nam'd Teribazus, not for golden ſtores,
Not for wide paſtures travers'd o'er with herds,
With bleating thouſands, or with bounding ſteeds,
Nor yet for pow'r, nor ſplendid honours fam'd.
Rich was his mind in ev'ry art divine,
And through the paths of ſcience had he walk'd
The votary of wiſdom. In the years,
When tender down inveſts the ruddy cheek,
He with the Magi turn'd the hallow'd page
Of Zoroaſtres; then his tow'ring ſoul
High on the plumes of contemplation ſoar'd,
And from the lofty Babylonian fane
With learn'd Chaldæans trac'd the myſtic ſphere;
There number'd o'er the vivid fires, that gleam
Upon the duſky boſom of the night.
Nor on the ſands of Ganges were unheard
The Indian ſages, from ſequeſter'd bow'rs
While, as attention wonder'd, they diſclos'd
The pow'rs of nature; whether in the woods,
The fruitful glebe, or flow'r, or healing plant,
The limpid waters, or the ambient air,
Or in the purer element of fire.

The fertile plains, where great Seſoſtris reign'd,
Myſterious Ægypt next the youth ſurvey'd,
From Elephantis, where impetuous Nile
Precipitates his waters, to the ſea,
Which far below receives the ſev'nfold ſtream.
Thence o'er th' Ionic coaſt he ſtray'd, nor paſs'd
Milétus by, which once inraptur'd heard
The tongue of Thales, nor Priene's walls,
Where Wiſdom dwelt with Bias, nor the ſeat
Of Pittacus along the Leſbian ſhore.
Here too melodious numbers charm'd his ear,
Which flow'd from Orpheus, and Muſæus old,
And thee, O father of immortal verſe,
Mæonides, whoſe ſtrains through ev'ry age
Time with his own eternal lip ſhall ſing.
Back to his native Suſa then he turn'd
His wandring ſteps. His merit ſoon was dear
To Hyperanthes generous and good.
And Ariana from Darius ſprung
With Hyperanthes, of th' imperial race,
Which rul'd th' extent of Aſia, in diſdain
Of all her greatneſs oft an humble ear
To him would bend, and liſten to his voice.
Her charms, her mind, her virtue he explor'd

Admiring.

Admiring. Soon was admiration chang'd
To love, nor lov'd he ſooner, than deſpair'd.
But unreveal'd and ſilent was his pain;
Nor yet in ſolitary ſhades he roam'd,
Nor ſhun'd reſort: but o'er his ſorrows caſt
A ſickly dawn of gladneſs, and in ſmiles
Conceal'd his anguiſh; while the ſecret flame
Rag'd in his boſom, and its peace conſum'd:
His heart ſtill brooding o'er theſe mournful thoughts.

Can I, O wiſdom, ſeek relief from thee,
Who doſt approve my paſſion? From the pow'r
Of beauty only thou wouldſt guard my heart.
But here thyſelf art charm'd, where ſoftneſs, grace,
And ev'ry virtue dignify deſire;
Yet thus to love deſpairing is to prove
The ſharpeſt ſorrow, which relentleſs Fate
Can from her ſtore of woes inflict on life:
But doſt not thou this moment warn my ſoul
To fly the fatal charmer? Do I pauſe?
Back to the wiſe Chaldæans will I go,
Or wander on the Ganges; where to heav'n
With thee my elevated ſoul ſhall tow'r,
With thee the ſecrets of the earth unveil,
There no tumultuous paſſion ſhall moleſt

My tranquil hours, and ev'ry thought be calm.
O wretched Teribazus! all conſpires
Againſt thy peace. Our mighty lord prepares
To overwhelm the Grecians. Ev'ry youth
Attends the war, and I, who late have poiz'd
With no inglorious arm the ſoldier's lance,
And near the ſide of Hyperanthes fought,
Muſt join the throng. How therefore can I fly
From Ariana! who with Aſia's queens
The ſplendid camp of Xerxes will adorn.
Then be it ſo. Again I will adore
Her gentle virtue. Her delightful tongue,
Her graceful ſweetneſs ſhall again diffuſe
Reſiſtleſs magic through my raviſh'd heart;
And thus when love with double rage inflam'd
Swells to diſtraction in my tortur'd breaſt,
Then———But in vain through darkneſs do I ſearch
My fate: deſpair and fortune be my guides.
The hour arriv'd, when Xerxes firſt advanc'd
His arms from Suſa's gates. The Perſian dames
(So were accuſtom'd all the eaſtern fair)
In ſumptuous cars accompanied his march;
And Ariana grac'd the beauteous train.
From morn till ev'ning Teribazus guards

Her paſſing wheels; his arm her weight ſuſtains
With trembling pleaſure often, as ſhe mounts
Th' imperial chariot; his aſſiduous hand
From each pure fountain wafts the living flood:
Nor ſeldom by the fair-one's ſoft command
Would he repoſe him at her feet reclin'd,
While o'er his lips her lovely forehead bow'd
Won with his grateful eloquence, that ſooth'd
With ſweet variety the tedious march,
Beguiling time. He too would then forget
His cares awhile, in raptures vain intranc'd,
Deluſion all, and fleeting rays of joy
Soon overcaſt with more intenſe deſpair;
Like wintry clouds, which op'ning for a time
Tinge their black ſkirts with ſcatter'd beams of day;
Then ſwiftly cloſing, on the brows of Morn
Condenſe their horrours, and in thickeſt gloom
The ruddy beauty veil. Such woes oppreſs'd
The Perſian's heart, not ſoften'd; for this day
His daring valour from the bleeding van
Oppos'd the frown of adamantine Mars.
With no tiara were his temples bound,
The ſlender lance of Aſia he diſdain'd,
And her light target. Eminent he mov'd

In

In Grecian arms the wonder of his foes.
Among th' Ionians had his ſtrenuous limbs
In war been practis'd. A reſplendent caſk
Flam'd on his head. Before his face and cheſt
Down to the knees his ample ſhield was ſpread.
A pond'rous aſh with ſkilful hands he graſp'd.
Thus arm'd, tremendous in the front he ſtood.
Beneath his might two bold Phliaſians died,
And three Tegeans, whoſe indignant chief,
Brave Hegeſander, vengeance breath'd in vain
With ſtreaming wounds repuls'd. Thus far unmatch'd
His ſtrength prevail'd, when Hyperanthes' voice
Recall'd his fainting legions. Now each band
Their languid courage reinforc'd with reſt.
Meantime with Teribazus thus confer'd
The godlike prince. Thou much-deſerving youth!
O had thy deeds with emulation warm'd
The frozen hearts of Perſia, Greece had wept
Her proſtrate ranks, not triumph'd in our ſhame
Relaxing now the wearied fight I wait,
Till from the camp with Abradates ſtrong
The brave Pharnuchus and Mazæus move,
And with freſh pow'rs renew the drooping war.
For ſince ſurpaſs'd in valour, we muſt waſte

By endleſs numbers, and continual toil
The matchleſs ardour of our gallant foes.
He ſaid. Immers'd in ſadneſs ſcarce replied,
But to himſelf thus plain'd the am'rous youth.
Still do I languiſh mourning o'er the fame,
My arm acquires. O wretched heart! thou ſeat
Of conſtant ſorrow, what deceitful ſmiles
Yet canſt thou borrow from illuſive hope
To flatter life. At Ariana's feet
What if with ſupplicating knees I bow'd,
Implor'd her pity, and reveal'd my love?
Wretch, canſt thou climb to yon effulgent orb,
And ſhare the ſplendours which irradiate heav'n?
Doſt thou aſpire to that exalted maid,
Great Xerxes' ſiſter, rivalling the hopes
Of Aſia's purpled potentates and kings?
Unleſs within her boſom I inſpir'd
A paſſion fervent as my own, nay more,
Such as might diſſipate each virgin fear,
And unreſtrain'd diſcloſe its fond deſire,
My hopes are fruitleſs. Plung'd in black deſpair
He thus revolv'd, when ſuddenly the cries
Of Aribæus ſmote his penſive ear.
By mutual danger, and by friendſhip join'd,

They

They had been long companions in the toils
Of war. Together with victorious ſteps
The ſons of Nile they chas'd, when Ægypt's pride
Before the arms of Hyperanthes fell.
Stretch'd on the plain, and cover'd o'er with wounds,
By all abandon'd, Teribazus views
His gallant friend. His languid ſoul awakes,
And forth he iſſues from the Perſian line.
The bleeding warriour in his ſtrong embrace
Swift he conveys. By indignation fir'd
Fierce from the Grecians Diophantus ruſh'd
With loud defiance. Teribazus leaves
His reſcu'd friend. His maſſy targe he rears,
Advances high his formidable ſpear,
And turns intrepid on th' approaching foe.
Amazement follow'd. On he ſtrode, and ſhook
The plumed honours of his ſhining creſt.
Th' ill-fated Greek awaits th' unequal fight;
Pierc'd in the throat with ſounding arms he falls;
Through ev'ry band the Mantinéans mourn.
Upon the ſlain the victor fix'd his ſight,
And thus reflected. By thy ſplendid arms
Thou art a Greek of no ignoble rank,
And from thy fall perhaps am I adorn'd

With more conſpicuous luſtre. What if heav'n
ſhould add new victims, like thyſelf, to grace
My undeſerving hand, who knows, but ſhe
Might ſmile upon my trophies. Oh! vain thought!
Diſperſe ye fantome hopes! Too long, my heart,
Haſt thou in vain contended with thy woes!
I ſtand this moment on the verge of life,
By fame invited, by deſpair impell'd
To paſs th' irremeable bound. No more
Shall Teribazus backward turn his ſteps,
But here decide his fate. Then beat no more,
Thou troubled heart, and ev'ry grief be ſtill
Now at th' approach of everlaſting peace.

He ended, when a mighty foe drew nigh;
Not leſs than Dithyrambus. E're they join'd,
The Perſian thus the Theſpian youth addreſs'd.

Say, art not thou th' unconquerable Greek,
Whoſe dauntleſs valour mow'd our battle down,
And ſcatter'd nations? To attempt thy force
This day I purpos'd, when our chiefs from fight
Their hoſt withdrew? That now my ſingle arm
Thou deign'ſt to meet, receive my thanks; and know,
The thought of conqueſt leſs employs my mind,
Than that by thee I cannot fall with ſhame.

He

He ceas'd. Theſe words the Theſpian chief return'd.
Of all the praiſes from thy gen'rous mouth
The only ſhare, which juſtice bids me claim,
Is, that I here adventure to confront
Thy matchleſs ſtrength. Believe not, that unmark'd
Were thy great deeds. From yon unbounded camp
None yet hath equall'd thy victorious hand.
But whence thy armour of the Grecian form?
Whence thy tall ſpear? thy helmet? whence the weight
Of that ſtrong ſhield unlike thy eaſtern friends?
O if thou be'ſt ſome fugitive, who, loſt
To liberty and virtue, art become
A tyrant's vile ſtipendiary; with grief
That valour, thus triumphant, I behold,
Which after all its danger, and brave toil
Deſerves no honour from the Gods, or men.
Here Teribazus with a ſigh return'd.
I am to Greece a ſtranger, and a wretch
To thee unknown, who ſeek, this hour, to die;
Though not ignobly, but in death to raiſe
My name from darkneſs, while I end my woes.
The Grecian then. I view thee, and I mourn.
A dignity, which virtue only bears,
And reſolution on thy brow enthron'd

(Though grief hath dim'd thy drooping eye) demand
My veneration; and whatever be
The malice of thy fortune, what the cares,
Which thus infeſt thy quiet, they create
Within my breaſt the pity of a friend:
Why haſt thou then compell'd me to oppoſe
My arm againſt thee, while thy might ſupports
Th' unjuſt ambition of malignant kings,
The foes to virtue, liberty, and peace?
Yet free from rage, or enmity I lift
My adverſe javelin. Victory I aſk,
Thy life may fate for happier hours reſerve.

This ſaid, their beaming lances they protend,
Of hoſtile hate, or fury both devoid;
As on the Iſthmian, or Olympic ſand
For fame alone contending. Either hoſt
Pois'd on their ſpears in ſilent wonder gaz'd.
The fight begins, when ſoon the Grecian lance,
Which all the day in conſtant battle worn
Unnumber'd ſhields and corſelets had transfix'd,
Againſt the Perſian target, ſhiv'ring breaks,
Its maſter's hand diſarming. Then began
The ſenſe of honour, and the dread of ſhame
To ſwell in Dithyrambus. Undiſmay'd

He grapples with the foe, and inſtant ſeiz'd
The threatning javelin, e're th' uplifted arm
Could execute the meditated wound.
The weapon burſt betwixt their ſtruggling hands.
They looſe their graſp, and bare their ſhining ſwords.
With equal ſwiftneſs to defend, or charge,
Each active youth advances, or recedes.
On ev'ry ſide they traverſe, now direct,
Obliquely now the wheeling blades deſcend.
Still is the conflict dubious, when the Greek
Diſſembling points his falchion to the earth,
His arm depreſs'd, as overcome with toil;
While with his buckler cautious he repels
The blows repeated from th' exulting foe.
Greece trembles for her hero. Joy pervades
The Aſian ranks, and Hyperanthes ſtrides
Before the line, preparing to receive
His friend triumphant. Teribazus now
Preſs'd with redoubled efforts. Still the Greek
Suſtains th' aſſault defenſive, and at laſt,
As with unguarded fury of his ſtrokes
Th' unwary Perſian ſide-ways ſwung his targe,
The fatal moment Dithyrambus watch'd,
And darting forward with his feet out-ſtretch'd

His falchion buries in th' obnoxious ſide.
Affection, grief, and terrour wing the ſpeed
Of Hyperanthes. From his bleeding foe
The Greek retires, not diſtant, and awaits
The eaſtern prince. But he with wat'ry cheeks,
And dumb with ſorrow claſps his dying friend,
From whoſe cold lip with interrupted phraſe
Theſe accents broke. O deareſt, beſt of men!
My heart is fruitful with ten thouſand thoughts
Of gratitude and love to thee; but fate
Denies my voice the utt'rance. O my friend!
O Hyperanthes! hear my tongue unfold
What thou ſhould'ſt ne'er have known before this hour;
When, as I open all my ſecret ſoul,
I may at once retire, and veil my eyes
In endleſs night: nor thou preſumption deem
What with my dying breath I here divulge.
I love thy ſiſter. With deſpair I lov'd,
And thence perhaps untimely is my date;
Though, witneſs heav'n, without regret I bleed
With honour thus in Perſia's fight and thine.
He ceas'd: th' inexorable hand of Fate
Weigh'd down his eyelids, and the gloom of death
His fleeting ſight eternally o'erſhades.

Him

Him on Choaſpes o'er the blooming verge
His frantic mother ſhall bewail, and ſtrew
Her ſilver treſſes in the cryſtal tide;
While all the ſhore re-echoes to the name
Of Teribazus loſt. Th' afflicted prince
The pallid corſe contemplating with tears,
Thus in the bitterneſs of grief exclaims.
Oh! Teribazus. Oh! my friend, whoſe loſs
I will deplore for ever. Oh! what pow'r
To me and thee averſe thus clos'd thy breaſt
To Hyperanthes with diſtruſt unkind.
She ſhould, ſhe muſt have lov'd thee. Now no more
Thy friendly aſpect ſhall delight my eyes,
While in remembrance thy unequall'd worth
Will live for ever to remind my grief
Of what I loſt. O Suſa, if again
Thee I reviſit from this hoſtile land,
Far from the clamours of tumultuous war,
Then ſhall my hours be vacant to complaint,
Whole years ſhalt thou be witneſs, while I mourn,
And Ariana ſhall aſſiſt my woes.
Let fierceſt vengeance now poſſeſs my ſoul.
He ſaid, and ardent ruſhes on the Greek,
Who, while his noble enemy expir'd,

And Hyperanthes ſnatch'd with tender arms
The laſt embraces from his gaſping friend,
Stood near reclin'd in ſadneſs o'er his ſhield,
And in the pride of victory repin'd,
Nor mark'd his threatning foe: when ſwift approach'd
Diomedon. Before the Theſpian youth
Aloft he rais'd his targe, and loudly thus.
HOLD thee, Barbarian, from a life more worth,
Than thee, and Xerxes, with his hoſt of ſlaves.
HIS words he ſeconds with his rapid lance.
Soon a tremendous conflict had enſu'd,
But Intaphernes, Mindus, and the half
Of Perſia's leaders anxious for the life
Of Hyperanthes pour'd with all their bands
Betwixt th' encountring chiefs. With mutual wrath
They ſtrove in vain the combat to renew.
So rage two bulls upon th' oppoſing banks
Of ſome deep flood, which parts the fruitful mead;
Defiance thunders from their angry mouths
In vain; in vain the furrow'd earth they rend:
Wide rolls the ſtream, and intercepts the war.
The fierce Platæan ſatiates his revenge
On vulgar lives. Before his dreaded arm
Whole ranks are ſcatter'd. But the Perſian prince

Borne

Borne down the ſtreſs of battle gains the ſhore,
Where then the brave Abrocomes advanc'd;
With him Orontes and Pharnuchus ſtood,
Mazæus, Abradates fam'd in arms,
And all the boldeſt of the eaſtern chiefs
Begirt with freſh battalions: here with ſpeed
Abrocomes his brother thus beſpake.
To Intaphernes is Pandates ſent
With charge to harraſs in perpetual fight
The Grecians next the mountains. Thou with me
And theſe unite thy valour. Here the flow'r
Of all our army is together drawn,
Here all the weight of battle will impend.
He ſaid. The godlike Hyperanthes ſeeks
The dang'rous van. He heads the ſplendid throng
Of ſatraps, princes, and imperial pow'rs;
Themſelves the lords of nations, who before
The throne of Xerxes tributary bow'd.
Now mix'd the war. Th' inverted javelins gleam
From ev'ry part, and fell Bellona roars.
Who firſt diſtain'd with Perſian blood his ſword?
Eupalamus. Artembares he ſlew
And Derdas fierce, whom Caucaſus had rear'd
On its tempeſtuous brow, the ſavage ſons

Of

Of violence and rapine; but their doom
Great Hyperanthes marks: his angry lance
Arreſts the victor in his haughty courſe.
Beneath the ſtrong Abrocomes o'erwhelm'd,
Meliſſus ſwells the number of the dead.
None could Mycenæ boaſt of prouder birth
Than young Meliſſus; blooming, as the ſon
Of Maia, all in radiant arms he grac'd
The front of battle; he in Cirrha's vale,
Where high Parnaſſus with its double top
O'erſhades the Pythian games, the envied prize
Of fame obtain'd: low ſinks his laurell'd head
In death's cold night, and horrid gore deforms
His graceful locks. Impatient for revenge
Ariſtobulus ſtrides before the van.
A ſtorm of fury darkens all his brow.
Around he rolls his gloomy eye, and marks
Achæmenes for death, of regal blood
Deriv'd from Crœſus, once th' imperial lord
Of nations; him the nymphs of Halys wept,
When with deluſive oracles beguil'd
By Delphi's God, he paſs'd their fatal waves
A mighty empire to diſſolve: nor knew
Th' ill-deſtin'd king, that envious Fortune watch'd

That

That dreadful moment from his hand to wreſt
The ſcepter of his fathers. In the ſhade
Of humble life his race on Tmolus' brow
Lay hid, 'till rous'd to battle here his breath
Achæmenes reſigns. Then Lycis bled
For horrid war ill-choſen. He was skill'd
To tune the lulling flute, and melt the heart;
Or with his pipe's awak'ning ſtrains invite
The lovely dames of Lydia to the dance:
They graceful o'er the verdant level mov'd
In varied meaſures, while the cooling breeze
Beneath their ſwelling garments wanton'd o'er
Their ſnowy breaſts, and ſmooth Cayſter's wave
Soft-gliding murmur'd by. His op'ning cheſt
Pours forth his entrails, and ſupine he falls.
Not long the Grecian triumphs. From the ſlain
In all the pride of conqueſt as he rends
His reeking javelin, Hyperanthe's ſteel
His knee invades, and burſts the ſinewy cords.
The Mycenæans with uplifted ſhields,
Corinthians, and Phliaſians gather round
The wounded Grecian. With redoubled rage
The conflict glows. Abrocomes incites
Each Perſian leader; all obey his voice;

Here Abradates, there Mazæus preſs'd,
Orontes, and Hydarnes; none retire
From toil, or peril: urg'd on ev'ry ſide
The Greeks at length th' abandon'd chief reſign.
Deſpairing, raging, deſtitute he ſtands
Propt on his ſpear; his wound forbids retreat.
None, but his brother Eumenes, abide
The dire extremity. His ſhield defends
The fainting chief, till Hyperanthes' ſword
Full on his arm its dreadful weight diſcharg'd.
Down with the buckler drops the ſever'd hand,
Nor quits its graſp. Now ſink the wretched pair
Beneath the Perſian's unreſiſted ſteel:
From both their breaſts the vital currents flow,
And mix their ſtreams. Elate the Perſians roll
Their deepning legions on the foes diſmay'd.
The Greeks their ſtation painfully maintain.
This ſoon the faithleſs Anaxander ſaw,
When thus to Leontiades he ſpake.

THIS is the time to aid our Perſian friends.
Behold the Greeks are preſs'd. Let Thebes retire,
And yield a bloodleſs conqueſt to the king.

THE Thebans ſtreight deſert the broken line
Not with unpuniſh'd treachery; the ſpears
Of

Of fierce Orontes, and Pharnuchus join'd
With Mindus gor'd their ſhameful flight, and thin'd
Their bleeding files. Meantime, as he who rul'd
Than Jove more antient on the throne of heav'n,
When from the womb of Chaos dark the world
Emerg'd to birth, where'er he view'd the jar
Of atoms yet diſcordant and unform'd,
Confuſion thence with pow'rful voice diſpell'd,
Till light and order univerſal reign'd;
So from the wall Leonidas explor'd
The various war. He ſaw the Theban rout,
That Corinth, Phlius, and Mycenæ look'd
Affrighted backward; inſtantly he charg'd
The ſons of Lacedæmon to repair
The diſunited phalanx. E're they move
Dieneces inſpires them. Fame, my friends,
Calls forth your valour in a ſignal hour;
For you this glorious period ſhe reſerv'd
To vindicate the Spartan name. He ſpake.
On either ſide ſupported by the might
Of Agis and of Alpheus he conducts
His gen'rous troop, who riveting their ſhields
In denſe array indiſſolubly firm
Confront the Perſians, and with death repulſe

Their

Their ſcatter'd numbers; when with efforts vain
They oft renew'd the conteſt, and recoil'd
As oft confounded with diminiſh'd ranks,
Thus Hyperanthes counſell'd. Learn, O chiefs,
From whence alone ſucceſs can grace our arms.
Theſe are a band ſelected from the Greeks,
Unlike the others, whom we lately chas'd;
Perhaps the Spartans, whom we oft have heard
By Demaratus prais'd. To break their line
Falſe is the hope, while unarray'd, and lax,
And wanting union ſingly we aſſail
Their ſtrength collected. Do not we preſide
O'er Aſia's myriads, and our valour boaſt,
And martial arts above the vulgar herd?
Let us, ye chiefs, attempt in order'd ranks
To join our force, and emulate the foe.

They wait not dubious. Soon a dreadful line
From Oeta's mountain to the ſhore extends,
Compos'd of all the leaders, Mindus bold,
Pharnuchus, and Mazæus, and the ſtrength
Of fierce Abrocomes, with each, who bore
The higheſt honours, and excell'd in war.
To theſe ſucceed a choſen number drawn
From thoſe, whom Aſia boaſts her braveſt ſons,

Who

Who from their king perpetual ſtipends ſhare;
And ſtation'd round his provinces by arms
His tyranny ſuſtain. In ev'ry part
Is Hyperanthes ſeen with active care
To form the huge battalion. Soon they ſtand
In juſt array, when cautious, leſt their march
Might ſtill relax their order, Perſia's prince
Amid the center of the foremoſt rank
Orontes plac'd, committing to his hand
Th' imperial ſtandard; whoſe expanded folds
Glow'd in the air, preſenting to the ſun
The richeſt dye of Tyre: the royal bird
Amid the gorgeous tincture ſhone expreſt
In flaming gold. On this the eaſtern chief
Commands each Perſian ſtation'd in the front
To turn his eyes regardful, and to guide
His ſlow and equal feet by this alone
Retiring, or advancing. Next he charg'd,
That ev'ry warriour through the num'rous files,
Obſerving none but thoſe before him rang'd,
Should watch their motions, and their ſteps purſue.
Cloſe by the ſtandard then th' intrepid chief
His poſt aſſumes, and animates the band.

ILLUSTRIOUS warriours, whoſe unconquer'd arms
Rebellious Ægypt, and the Libyan felt,
Think what the ſplendour of your former deeds
From you demands; remember, from the great
Heroic actions are a debt to fame.
No middle courſe remains for them to tread,
Whom ſhe hath once ennobled; and this hour
Or with freſh trophies will enlarge your praiſe,
Or will for ever with diſhonour blaſt.

THE hero ſaid, and all to fight proceed.
As when tempeſtuous Eurus ſtems the weight
Of weſtern Neptune ſtruggling through the ſtraits,
Which bound Alcides' labours; here the ſtorm
With rapid wing reverberates the tide,
There the contending ſurge with furrow'd tops
To mountains ſwells, and whelming o'er the beach
On either coaſt inveſts with hoary foam
The Mauritanian and Iberian ſtrand:
Not with leſs rage in hideous onſet meet
The Grecians and Barbarians. Theſe preſerve
Their foremoſt ranks unbroken, where was drawn
The prime of Aſia's warriours; and the croud,
Though ſtill promiſcuous pouring from behind,
Yet added preſſure to th' imbattled chiefs

With

With endleſs numbers. Like the mural ſtrength
Of ſome proud City bulwark'd round, and arm'd
With riſing tow'rs to guard her wealthy ſtores;
Immoveable, impenetrable ſtood
The ſerried phalanx of the Greeks. Behind,
Their country ſpread, their fields with plenty crown'd,
Their native walls and habitations lay
With each dear pledge of friendſhip and of love.
High in the Perſian van th' exalted lance
Of Hyperanthes flam'd. Beſide him preſs'd
Abrocomes, Hydarnes, and the bulk
Of Abradates terrible in war.
And here the great Dieneces upheld
His ſhield's expanded ſurface, and alone
Firm, as a Memphian pyramid, ſuſtain'd
The ſtreſs of thouſands. Alpheus here unmov'd,
And Agis there connect their ſpacious orbs,
With Menalippus wiſe Megiſtias' heir
In one impervious line. Long time the hoſts
Maintain in ſtrong and unrelax'd array
The conflict undecided; nor could Greece
Repel the adverſe numbers, nor the force
Of Aſia's myriads could remove the Greeks.

But Now from Sparta's king, who ſoon diſcern'd
The Perſian's new arrangement, Medon haſtes,
Th' illuſtrious chief of Locris, from the race
Of Ajax ſprung in Trojan fields renown'd:
To wiſe Dieneces he thus began.

Leonidas commands the Grecian line
To yield before the Perſians, and with ſpeed
To meaſure back ſome paces. Soon, he deems,
The unexperienc'd foe in wild purſuit
Will break their order. Then the charge renew;
Let Agis, join'd with Alpheus, from the line
Ruſh with Laconia's troop imbattled deep,
And force a paſſage through the Barb'rous hoſt;
Thou with a ſtrong battalion from the ſons
Of Locris drawn muſt follow ſwift, and reach
The Spartans led by Agis; with the reſt
Of Locris' youth ſhall I advance to fill
Your vacant ſtation, and the line maintain;
While in the narrow entrance, where the paſs
Looks o'er the Malian plain on Perſia's camp,
Do thou arrange to intercept the foe,
Should Aſia pour freſh ſuccours from her tents:
Then Xerxes ſoon the ſlaughter ſhall deplore
Of all theſe thouſands in the ſtraits inclos'd

For ſure deſtruction; and the Gods of Greece
Behold their temples with profuſion grac'd
Of ſplendid off'rings from Barbarian ſpoils
Won by their free-born ſupplicants this day.
THIS heard, Dieneces obedient gave
Through ev'ry band the ſignal of retreat,
When all at once drew backward. Perſia ſtop'd,
As with amazement rooted to the earth
At unexpected conqueſt; 'till the voice
Of fierce Abrocomes their minds awakes
With theſe triumphant accents. By the ſun
They fly before us. My victorious friends,
Delay you then to enter Greece? Away,
Ruſh on undaunted. I already hear,
Our horſe and chariots thundr'ing o'er their plains,
And view their towns involv'd in Perſian fires.
HE ſaid. With hurried violence they roll
Tumultuous forward. All with headlong pace
Wide from their ranks expatiate in purſuit,
Disjoin their order, and the line diſſolve.
This when the ſage Dieneces deſcries,
The Grecians halt returning to the charge
With ſudden onſet. In a moment, pierc'd
By Lacedæmon's chief, Orontes falls,

And

And quits th' imperial banner; this the Greek
In triumph waves, and gives the dreadful ſign.
At once with Agis tow'ring in the front,
And rapid Alpheus all Laconia's band
In deep arrangement burſting from the line
Bear down with irreſiſtible career
The eaſtern legions, ſhatter'd and o'erturn'd
With all their ſtandards trampled on the plain.
As the ſwift veſſel, when a riſing gale
Diſtends the canvaſs, its reſiſtleſs courſe
Impells through millions of oppoſing waves;
Through the Barbarian multitudes ſo pierc'd
The Spartan wedge. Invincible o'er hills
Of arms, and mangled corſes they impreſs
Their crimſon footſteps. Perſia's braveſt chiefs,
Ev'n Hyperanthes from the line is driv'n;
And flying thouſands through the paſs are ſwept
Before the Spartans with a Locrian troop
Of hideous depth Dieneces purſues
His conqu'ring friends, and hews his purple way
Through Aſia's numbers, which again were clos'd
In vain: himſelf unconquerable leads
Deſtruction on, and heaps the rock with death.
But on the broken foe what ruin falls

From Alpheus' ſword? O'er all in ſwift purſuit
Was he renown'd. His rapid feet had match'd
The ſon of Peleus in the duſty courſe,
Or had he run for Atalanta's love,
He had rejected Cytheræa's aid;
Nor of her ſwiftneſs to beguile the fair
Before her ſteps had thrown the golden balls.
But now the wrongs, the long-remember'd wrongs
Of Polydorus animate his ſtrength
With tenfold vigour; guided by revenge
His falchion reddens with Barbarian blood;
The gory drops beſprinkled all his ſhield,
Like crimſon poppies o'er the yellow plain.
As when with horrour wing'd a whirlwind rends
A ſhatter'd navy; from the ocean caſt,
Th' enormous fragments hide the ſandy beach:
Thus o'er the rock the Perſians lay beſtrewn
By Alpheus raging in the ſwift purſuit.
Not with ſeverer pangs the God of day
The Theban queen afflicted, when incens'd
With her proud vaunts he hurl'd her blooming race
From youth and beauty to the pale abodes;
Than now diſtracted Hyperanthes' ſoul,
As round him, bleeding by the Spartan's lance,

His nobleſt friends lay gaſping. Oft he ſtrove
To turn his flying legions, oft the fight
With Abradates and his brother's force
Renews, againſt inſuperable foes
In vain repugnant; till by all around
Deſerted, mixing with the gen'ral rout
He yields to fortune, and the field forſakes.
So with relapſing waves the ebbing tide
Beats for a time againſt the ſhelving ſtrand,
Still by degrees retiring, and at laſt
Within the boſom of the main ſubſides.
Now at Thermopylæ's extremeſt bound
The Spartans check'd their progreſs. Soon approach'd
Dieneces, and thus began. Behold,
What numbers have we paſs'd of Perſia's ſons.
Be ſwift, my friends, and form. He ſaid, and fill'd
The narrow ſtraits with order'd files, a depth
Of fifty warriours; half on Aſia's hoſt,
Half tow'rd the paſs were turn'd, a double front,
Where ev'ry rank with twenty javelins flam'd.
The Locrian band to Agis is aſſign'd,
Who ſtands prepar'd to ſtop the flying foes;
Dieneces himſelf to Perſia's camp
Preſents the terrours of the Spartan ſteel.

Now

Now, Muſe, the wond'rous ſtratagem diſplay,
Which Sparta's hero, whoſe preſiding care
Mark'd all the great viciſſitudes of fight,
And rul'd the courſe of ſlaughter, had conceiv'd
To whelm the num'rous, long-reſiſting foe
In hideous death, and ſignalize the day
With horrours new to war. As o'er the wall,
His conſtant ſtation, darting through the ſtraits
His watchful eye, e're yet the battle clos'd,
He view'd the hoſtile myriads ſwarming down,
And nations ſtill ſucceeding from the camp
Immenſe, exhauſtleſs, by an horrid length
Of cluſt'ring helms, and ſhields, and threatning ſpears
Join'd to the Grecian van; the wary chief,
Leſt by the long-protracted fight his Greeks
Might yield o'erlabour'd, from the Locrians choſe
A thouſand warriours. Theſe by Maron led
Aſcend the mountain, which o'erhung the paſs.
His charge he ſoon reveals. A thouſand hands
At once with reſtleſs pains aſſemble ſtones
Of hugeſt bulk, and wither'd trunks uptorn
In elder times by whirlwinds from the grove.
Unwearied then they looſen from the rocks
Broad, craggy fragments; from the mountain hew'd

Its venerable firs, and aged oaks
Of wide circumference, and knotted ſtrength,
Which of their branches by the lightning bared,
Preſented ſtill againſt its blaſting flame
Their hoary pride unſhaken. Theſe the Greeks
Roll heavy on, with maſſy leavers heave,
Or drag with ſtrong-knit cables, till they reach,
Where o'er the Perſian multitudes inclin'd
The mountain's edge; ſo lofty, that the voice
Of war below there loſt its deafning roar,
And ſoften'd into murmurs. Still his poſt,
Though Hyperanthes from the field was driv'n,
With thronging numbers Intaphernes bold
Beneath the ſhade of this incumbent hill
Againſt the fierce Diomedon maintain'd;
Great Intaphernes, progeny of kings,
Whom o'er Damaſcus, and the Syrian palms
Had Xerxes ſeated with deſpotic ſway
His ſubſtitute. This Maron from on high
Surveys, and gives the ſignal; downward ſinks
The nodding pile, ſtupendous heap of death!
Trees roll'd on trees with mingled rock deſcend,
Unintermitted ruin. Loud reſound
The hollow trunks againſt the mountain's ſide,

Swift bounds each craggy maſs. The foes beneath
Look up aghaſt, with horrour ſhrink, and die;
Whole legions cruſh'd beneath the dreadful heaps
Lie hid and loſt, as never they had known
A name, or being; while around them grew
A hill of ruin. Numbers ſtill ſurvive,
Who ſhun deſtruction with impetuous flight;
But Agis ſtops them: Intaphernes falls
Before his thund'ring arm. Again they turn
To meet reſiſtleſs ruin. From behind
With twice two hundred Locrians Agis pours.
MEANTIME the Grecian line (ſo Sparta's king
Decreed) had left its ſtation, and beyond
The heaps of dreadful carnage was advanc'd;
There, ſtretch'd from Oeta to the Malian bay,
The Locrians led by Medon had diſpos'd,
With Corinth, Phlius and Mycenæ's train
Their hoſtile phalanx o'er the leſs'ning paſs.
Along the mountain's ſide Platæa's troop,
The Mantinéans, and Tegæans ſtood,
An horrid length of war. Th' unwearied ſwords
Of Dithyrambus and Diomedon
Still blaz'd the terrour of the Barb'rous hoſt.
Before them fled the Perſians to the ſhore,

All in a moment by the various bands
Of Greece ſurrounded. From the gulph profound
Perdition here inevitable frowns,
And there, incircled by a grove of ſpears,
They ſtand devoted hecatombs to Mars.
Now not a moment's interval delays
Their gen'ral doom, but down the Malian ſteep
Prone are they hurried to th' expanded arms
Of Horrour riſing from th' op'ning deep,
And graſping all their numbers, as they fall.
The dire confuſion, like a ſtorm, invades
The chafing billows; loud reſounds the ſhore:
And o'er whole troops by fell Bellona roll'd
In one vaſt ruin from the craggy ridge,
O'er all their arms and enſigns deep ingulph'd,
With hideous roar the ſurge for ever clos'd.

End of the Fifth Book.

LEONIDAS.

BOOK VI.

The Argument.

Night coming on, the Grecians retire to their tents. A guard is plac'd on the Phocian wall under the command of Agis. He admits into the camp a lady accompanied by a ſingle ſlave, and conducts them to Leonidas; when ſhe diſcovers herſelf to be Ariana ſiſter of Xerxes and Hyperanthes, and ſues for the body of Teribazus; which being found among the ſlain, ſhe kills herſelf upon it. The ſlave who attended her, proves to be Polydorus, brother of Alpheus and Maron, and who had been formerly carried into captivity by a Phœnician pirate. He relates before an aſſembly of the chiefs a meſſage from Demaratus to the Spartans, which diſcloſes the treachery of the Thebans, and of Epialtes, the Malian, who had undertaken to lead part of the Perſian army through a paſs among the mountains of Oeta. This information throws the council into a great tumult, which is pacified by Leonidas, who ſends Alpheus to obſerve the motions of theſe Perſians, and Dieneces with a party of Lacedæmonians to ſupport the Phocians, with whom the defence of theſe paſſages in the hills had been intruſted. In the mean time Agis ſends the bodies of Teribazus and Ariana to the camp of Xerxes.

IN ſable pomp with all her ſtarry train
The Night aſſum'd her throne. Recall'd from war
Her long-protracted labours Greece forgets,
Diſſolv'd in ſilent ſlumber; all but thoſe,
Who watch'd th' uncertain perils of the dark,
An hundred warriours: Agis was their chief.
High on the wall intent the hero ſat,
As o'er the ſurface of the tranquil main
Along its undulating breaſt the wind
The various din of Aſia's hoſt convey'd
In one deep murmur ſwelling in his ear:
When by the ſound of footſteps down the paſs
Alarm'd he calls aloud. What feet are thoſe,
Which beat the echoing pavement of the rock?
With ſpeed reply, nor tempt your inſtant fate.
HE ſaid, and thus return'd a voice unknown.
Not with the feet of enemies we come,
But crave admittance with a friendly tongue.
THE Spartan anſwers. Through the midnight ſhade
What purpoſe draws your wandring ſteps abroad?
To whom the ſtranger. We are friends to Greece,
And to the preſence of the Spartan king
Admiſſion we implore. The cautious chief

Of

Of Lacedæmon heſitates again.
When thus with accents muſically ſweet
A tender voice his wondring ear allur'd.
O Gen'rous Grecian, liſten to the pray'r
Of one diſtreſs'd! whom grief alone hath led
In this dark hour to theſe victorious tents,
A wretched woman innocent of fraud.
The Greek deſcending through th' unfolded gates
Upheld a flaming brand. One firſt appear'd
In ſervile garb attir'd; but near his ſide
A woman graceful and majeſtic ſtood;
Not with an aſpect rivalling the power
Of fatal Helen, or the wanton charms
Of Love's ſoft queen; but ſuch as far excell'd,
Whate'er the lilly blending with the roſe
Paints on the cheek of beauty ſoon to fade;
Such as expreſs'd a mind, which wiſdom rul'd,
And ſweetneſs temper'd, virtue's pureſt light
Illumining the countenance divine,
Yet could not ſooth remorſeleſs fate, nor teach
Malignant Fortune to revere the good,
Which oft with anguiſh rends the ſpotleſs heart,
And oft aſſociates wiſdom with deſpair.
In courteous phraſe began the chief humane.

EXALTED fair, who thus adorn'ſt the night,
Forbear to blame the vigilance of war,
And to the laws of rigid Mars impute,
That I thus long unwilling have delay'd
Before the great Leonidas to place
This your apparent dignity and worth.
HE ſpake, and gently to the lofty tent
Of Sparta's king the lovely ſtranger guides.
At Agis' ſummons with a mantle broad
His mighty limbs Leonidas infolds,
And quits his couch. In wonder he ſurveys
Th' illuſtrious virgin, whom his preſence aw'd:
Her eye ſubmiſſive to the ground inclin'd
With veneration of the godlike man.
But ſoon his voice her anxious dread diſpell'd,
Benevolent and hoſpitable thus.
THY form alone, thus amiable and great,
Thy mind delineates, and from all commands
Supreme regard. Relate, thou noble dame,
By what relentleſs deſtiny compell'd,
Thy tender feet the paths of darkneſs tread.
Rehearſe th' afflictions, whence thy virtue mourns.

On her wan cheek a ſudden bluſh aroſe,
Like day's firſt dawn upon the twilight pale,
And wrapt in grief theſe words a paſſage broke.
If to be moſt unhappy, and to know,
That hope is irrecoverably fled;
If to be great and wretched may deſerve
Commiſeration from the good; behold,
Thou glorious leader of unconquer'd bands,
Behold deſcended from Darius' loins
Th' afflicted Ariana, and my pray'r
Accept with pity, nor my tears diſdain!
Firſt, that I lov'd the beſt of human race,
By nature's hand with ev'ry virtue form'd,
Heroic, wiſe, adorn'd with ev'ry art;
Of ſhame unconſcious does my heart reveal.
This day in Grecian arms conſpicuous clad
He fought, he fell. A paſſion long conceal'd
For me alas! within my brother's arms
His dying breath reſigning, he diſclos'd.
—Oh I will ſtay my ſorrows! will forbid
My eyes to ſtream before thee, and my heart,
Thus full of anguiſh, will from ſighs reſtrain!
For why ſhould thy humanity be griev'd
With my diſtreſs, and learn from me to mourn

The lot of nature doom'd to care and pain!
Hear then, O king, and grant my ſole requeſt,
To ſeek his body in the heaps of ſlain.

THUS to the Spartan ſu'd the regal maid
Reſembling Ceres in majeſtic woe,
When, ſupplicant at Jove's reſplendent throne,
From dreary Pluto, and th' infernal gloom
Her lov'd and loſt Proſerpina ſhe ſought.
Fix'd on the weeping queen with ſtedfaſt eyes,
Laconia's chief theſe tender thoughts recall'd.

SUCH are thy ſorrows, O for ever dear!
Who now at Lacedæmon doſt deplore
My everlaſting abſence! then inclin'd
His head, and ſigh'd; nor yet forgot to charge
His friend, the gentle Agis, through the ſtraits
The Perſian princeſs to attend and aid.
With careful ſteps they ſeek her lover's corſe.
The Greeks remember'd, where by Fate repreſs'd
His arm firſt ceas'd to mow their legions down,
And from beneath a maſs of Perſian ſlain
Soon drew the hero by his armour known.
To Agis' high pavilion they reſort.
Now, Ariana, what tranſcending pangs
Thy ſoul involv'd? What horrour claſp'd thy heart?

But love grew mightieſt, and her beauteous limbs
On the cold breaſt of Teribazus threw
The grief-diſtracted maid. The clotted gore
Deform'd her ſnowy boſom. O'er his wounds
Looſe flow'd her hair, and bubbling from her eyes
Impetuous ſorrow lav'd the purple clay:
When forth in groans her lamentations broke.
O TORN for ever from my weeping eyes!
Thou, who deſpairing to obtain her heart,
Who then moſt lov'd thee, didſt untimely yield
Thy life to Fate's inevitable dart
For her, who now in agony unfolds
Her tender boſom, and repeats her vows
To thy deaf ear, who fondly to her own
Now claſps thy breaſt inſenſible and cold.
Alas! do thoſe unmoving, ghaſtly orbs
Perceive my guſhing anguiſh! Does that heart,
Which Death's inanimating hand hath chill'd,
Share in my ſuff'rings, and return my ſighs!
—Oh! bitter unſurmountable diſtreſs!
Lo! on thy breaſt is Ariana bow'd,
Hangs o'er thy face, unites her cheek to thine
Not now to liſten with enchanted ears

To thy perſuaſive eloquence no more
Charm'd with the wiſdom of thy copious mind!
She could no more. Invincible deſpair
Suppreſs'd her utt'rance. As a marble form
Fix'd on the ſolemn ſepulcher, unmov'd
O'er ſome dead hero, whom his country lov'd,
Bends down the head with imitated woe:
So paus'd the princeſs o'er the breathleſs clay,
Intranc'd in ſorrow. On the dreary wound,
Where Dithyrambus' ſword was deepeſt plung'd,
Mute for a ſpace and motionleſs ſhe gaz'd.
Then with a look unchang'd, nor trembling hand
Drew forth a poniard, which her garment veil'd,
And ſheathing in her heart th' abhorred ſteel,
On her ſlain lover, ſilent ſinks in death.
In vain the Spartan interven'd. With tears
He view'd the proſtrate lovers, and exclaim'd.
Oh! moſt unhappy, heavy on your heads
Hath ſorrow fall'n, which o'er your pale remains
Commands this pity from a ſtranger's eye!
Illuſtrious ruins, may the grave impart
That peace, which life denied! And now receive
This pious office from a hand unknown.

So

So ſaying, from his ſhoulders he unclaſp'd
His ample robe, and ſtrew'd the waving folds
O'er the pale dead. Then turning, he beſpake
The ſlave, who ſtood beſide him. Thou, who ledſt
Thy queen ill-deſtin'd to the fatal tents
Of Lacedæmon, now returning bear
Her bleeding reliques to the Perſian lord;
Thou, and theſe captives, whom I free from bonds.
ART thou a Spartan (interrupts the ſlave)
And doſt thou counſel me to ſeek again
A clime unbleſs'd, where freedom never dwells?
No. Bear me to Leonidas. Alone
Shall he decide, if wretched, as I ſeem;
I may not claim protection from this camp.
WHOE'ER thou art (amaz'd the chief replies)
Thou may'ſt indeed a better lot demand,
Than I, a ſtranger to thy hidden worth,
Unconſcious offer'd. Thy ignoble garb
Conceal'd a virtue, which I now revere.
And ſince thy ſuff'ring ſoul hath long indur'd
The gloom of bondage, and the hated face
Of tyrants view'd, now change the horrid ſcene;
Here freedom reigns, and juſtice: come and ſeek
With me their great protector. Ending here,

Swift

Swift he conducts him to Laconia's king,
When Agis thus Leonidas addreſs'd.
Lo! far ſuperiour to the name, which marks
His habit with diſhonour, one, who ſues
For thy protection! Here the ſlave ſubjoin'd.
I ſtand thy ſuppliant now. Thou ſoon ſhalt learn,
If I deſerve thy favour. I intreat
To ſee th' aſſembled leaders of your hoſt,
For I am fraught with tydings, which import
The weal of all the Grecians. Agis ſtreight
Appointed by Leonidas convenes
The various leaders. To the tent they throng,
Amidſt them plac'd, the ſtranger thus began.
O ALPHEUS! Maron! hither turn your ſight,
And know your brothers. From their ſeats they ſtart.
From either burſt, with tears of tranſport mix'd,
The name of Polydorus. On his breaſt
Each fondly ſtrives to ruſh, but he withſtands;
While down his cheek a ſtream of anguiſh pours
From his dejected eyes in torture bent
On that vile garb, which ſham'd his free-born limbs.
At length theſe accents intermix'd with groans
Broke from his heart, while all ſtood wond'ring round.

You firſt ſhall know, if this unhappy ſlave
Yet merits your embraces. Now approach'd
Leonidas. Before him all recede,
Ev'n Alpheus's ſelf; and yields his brother's hand,
Which in his own the gen'rous hero preſs'd:
Then with majeſtic goodneſs thus beſpake
Th' afflicted youth, and mitigates his pains.

FORBEAR to mourn, thou unexampled youth.
Thy friends, thy country, all on thee ſhall gaze
With veneration, whoſe unſhaken mind
The chains of Aſia never could debaſe.
Lo! ev'ry breaſt is open to thy worth,
Each tongue prepares to hail thee with applauſe,
Who haſt thy country honour'd ev'n in bonds.

HE ceas'd, when Alpheus with an eager hand
Diveſts his brother of his baſe attire,
And his own mantle o'er the ſhoulders threw
Of Polydorus. Agis too advanc'd,
With friendly arms infolds him, and began.

NOW, in thy native liberty ſecure,
Smile on thy paſt afflictions, and relate,
What chance reſtor'd thy virtue to the Greeks.

THEN Polydorus to the liſt'ning chiefs.
I was a Spartan. When my tender prime

On

On manhood border'd, from my native ſhore
Snatch'd by Phœnician pirates, I was ſold
To Ariana, ſiſter to the king
And Hyperanthes. Fortune there was kind
My bonds committing to that gentle hand.
Yet was I ſtill a captive, and eſtrang'd
From Lacedæmon. Demartus oft
With friendly ſorrows would my lot deplore,
Nor leſs his own ill-fated virtue mourn'd
Loſt to his country in a ſervile court,
The center of corruption; where in ſmiles
Is envy painted, treachery, and hate,
And rankling malice; where alone ſincere
The diſſolute ſeeks no diſguiſe: where he
Who all poſſeſſes, that a king can give,
Is far leſs happy than the meaneſt ſon
Of liberty, and groveling, as the ſlave,
Who ſerves his cruel pride. Yet here the ſun
Ten times his annual period hath renew'd,
Since Polydorus hath in bondage groan'd.
My bloom now paſt, or elſe by pining care
Untimely wither'd, I at laſt return,
And to my native land the tydings bear
Of inſtant deſolation. Here in grief

He

He paus'd, when thus Leonidas. Proceed.
Though from thy lips inevitable fate
To all be threaten'd, thou art heard by none,
Whoſe dauntleſs ſouls can entertain a thought,
But how to fall the nobleſt. Thus the chief.
The reſt in ſpeechleſs expectation wait.
Such was the ſolemn ſilence, which o'erſpread
The ſhrine of Ammon, or Dodona's ſhades,
When anxious mortals from the mouth of Jove
Their doom explor'd. Nor Polydorus long
Suſpends the Grecians, but reſumes his tale.
As I this night accompanied the ſteps
Of Ariana, e're we reach'd the ſtraits
Before our view then op'ning, one appear'd
With haſty feet now traverſing the way,
Now fix'd intenſely tow'rds the Grecian wall;
Then on a ſudden ſtarting would renew
His reſtleſs pace. As nearer we approach'd,
He by the moon, which glimmer'd o'er our heads,
Deſcried us, when advancing he demands
Where bent our midnight courſe. I knew the voice
Of Demaratus. To my breaſt I claſp'd
The venerable exile, and replied.
Our purpoſe aſk not. Sparta's camp we ſeek,

And oh! farewel for ever! He rejoin'd.
Thrice happy Polydorus! Thou again
Shalt viſit Sparta to theſe eyes denied.
Upon your paths may heav'n's protection ſmile.
Soon as you mix with yon triumphant tents,
Say to the Spartans, whoſe unconquer'd arms
Defend thoſe rocks, you ſaw their exil'd king;
Say, though their blind credulity depriv'd
The wretched Demaratus of his home,
From ev'ry joy ſecluded, which awaits
The parent and the husband, from his wife,
His offspring torn, his friends, and native gates,
Him from his virtue could they ne'er divide:
Say, that ev'n here, where all are kings, or ſlaves,
Amid the riot of flagitious courts
Not quite extinct the Spartan ſpirit glows
Within his breaſt, though grief hath dim'd its fires.
Remembring this to Lacedæmon's chief
Report, that newly to the Perſian hoſt
Return'd a Malian, Epialtes nam'd,
Who as a ſpy had ſought the Grecian tents.
He to the tyrant magnified his art,
Which with deluſive eloquence had wrought
The Greeks to ſuch deſpair, that Aſia's king

Had

Had been e'er now their ſov'reign maſter own'd,
Had not the ſpirit of their ſingle chief,
By fear unconquer'd, and on death reſolv'd,
Reſtor'd their valour: therefore would the king
Truſt to his guidance a ſelected band,
They ſoon ſhould pierce th' unguarded bounds of Greece,
Led through a ſecret paſſage o'er the hills,
Where no Leonidas ſhould bar their way.
Meantime by him the treach'rous Thebans ſent
Aſſurance of their aid. Th' aſſenting king
At once decreed two myriads to advance
With Hyperanthes, with Abrocomes,
And bold Hydarnes. Ev'ry chief beſides,
Whom youth, or valour, or ambition warms,
Rous'd by the traitor's eloquence, attends
From all the nations, fir'd with eager zeal
The firſt to enter Greece. In ſilence now
The youth remains. Tremendous from his ſeat
Uproſe Platæa's chief. His eyes were flames,
And thus on trembling Anaxander burſt
The furious accents from his livid lips.
YET e're we fall, O traitor, ſhall this arm
To hell's avenging furies ſink thy head.

ALL now is tumult, ev'ry boſom ſwells
With rage untam'd, and vengeance. Half unſheath'd
Diomedon's impetuous falchion blaz'd.
But, as the Cholchian ſorcereſs renown'd
In fables old, or Circe, when they fram'd
A potent ſpell from Erebus to wake
The dead in dark and fleeting forms to glide
Before the moon's dim twilight, with their charms
Smooth'd all the ſea, and ſilenc'd each rude blaſt;
Till not a billow heav'd againſt the ſhore,
Nor ev'n the wanton-winged zephir breath'd
The lighteſt whiſper through the magic ari:
So, when thy voice, Leonidas, is heard,
Fell Diſcord liſtens; Rage with ſacred awe
Subſides in ſilence; while Confuſion ſlept.

WITHHOLD this raſhneſs (interpos'd the king)
Before we puniſh, let us find the guilt.
Not yet hath Perſia overturn'd our tents,
Nor yet her Barb'rous ſhouts our ears alarm.
We ſtill have time for vengeance, and to know,
If yet our ſwords deſtruction may repel,
Or how to die moſt glorious. Then aroſe
Dieneces, and thus the Greeks beſpake.

E'RE yet they paſs our borders, Xerxes' hoſt
Muſt learn to conquer, and the Greeks to fly.
The ſpears of Phocis guard the ſecret paſs.
Let inſtant meſſengers be thither ſent
To know the Perſians progreſs. Alpheus here.
LEONIDAS, behold, my willing feet
Shall to the Phocians bear thy great commands,
Or climb the hills to mark th' approaching foe.
THOU active ſon of valour (thus returns
The chief of Lacedæmon) in my thoughts
For ever preſent, when the public cauſe
Demands the ſwift, the vigilant, and bold!
Go and ſurmount the rocks aerial height.
And while, around, Dieneces conducts
An hundred Spartans to the Phocians aid,
Thou from the hills obſerve the Perſians march.
BEFORE the purple-winged morn the night
Retiring warn'd their conference to ceaſe.
They all diſperſe. When haſtning on his courſe,
And ready now to climb the lofty crags,
O Polydorus, Alpheus thus exclaims,
Long loſt and late recover'd! we muſt part
Once more, and now for ever. Thou return,
And kiſs the ſacred ſoil, which gave thee birth,

Which

Which calls thee back to freedom? Deareſt youth
I ſhould have tears to give thee—but farewel!
My country chides me loit'ring in thy arms.
THIS ſaid, he quits his brother, and aſcends,
While Polydorus anſwers. Alpheus no.
I have the marks of bondage to eraſe,
My blood muſt waſh the ſhameful ſtain away.
WE have a father (Maron interpos'd)
Thy unexpected preſence will revive
His heavy age, that childleſs elſe will mourn.
Here Polydorus with a gloomy ſmile.
ILL ſhould I comfort others. View theſe eyes;
Faint is their light, and vaniſh'd is my bloom
Before its hour of ripeneſs. In my breaſt
Grief as a native will for ever dwell,
Nor yield to time. Unceaſing ſhall my ſoul
Brood o'er the dire remembrance of my youth
In ſervitude thus waſted. Life with me
Hath loſt its ſavour. Then in ſilent woe
He hangs his head. His brother pleads in vain.
He anſwers only with repeated groans.
Now in his view Dieneces advanc'd
With Sparta's band. On them his eyes are fix'd
Immoveable, and thus his mind revolves.

I TOO, like theſe, in Lacedæmon ſprung,
Inſtructed once, like theſe, to poize the ſpear,
And lift the pond'rous ſhield. Ill-deſtin'd wretch!
Thy arm is now enervate, and would fail
Beneath the buckler's weight. O cruel Heav'n
Who didſt compel my free-born hand to change
The warriour's arms for ignominious bonds;
Wouldſt thou compenſate for my chains, my ſhame,
My ten years ſorrows, and the black deſpair,
Which on my youth has prey'd; propitious once
Grant, I may bear my buckler to the field,
And known a Spartan ſeek the ſhades below.
HE ceas'd, and ſudden turn'd his ſteps aſide
To find the tent of Agis; there the youth
With grateful ſorrow miniſters his aid,
While with a kind and hoſpitable hand
The gentle Agis by her lover's corſe
On one ſad bier the pallid beauties laid
Of Ariana. He from ſhackles frees
Two Perſian captives, whom his gen'rous arm
That day preſerv'd from ſlaughter, then began.
To you I give that freedom, which you ſought
To ſnatch from me. This recompence I aſk,
And this alone. Tranſport to Aſia's camp

Theſe bleeding reliques; bid the Perſian king
Weep o'er this flow'r thus blaſted in its pride;
Then ſay, th' all-judging Gods have thus ordain'd:
Thou, whoſe ambition o'er the groaning earth
Leads deſolation, o'er the nations ſpreads
Calamity and tears, thou firſt ſhalt mourn,
And through thy houſe deſtruction firſt ſhall range.

Thus charg'd, to Aſia's hoſt the captives bend.
They ſoon attain the Phocian wall, where now
Was Dithyrambus ſtation'd. He perceives
The mournful bier approach. To him the fate
Of Ariana was already told.
He meets the captives, when, with weeping eyes
On Teribazus turn'd, he thus exclaims.

O! as thy arms preſent thee, hadſt thou been
Indeed a Grecian! then thy gen'rous heart
Its valour ne'er had waſted to ſupport
A king's injuſtice; then a gentler fate
Had bleſs'd thy life, or bleeding thou hadſt known,
How ſweet is death for liberty. A Greek
This friendly wiſh affords thee, though his head
Had loſt the honours gather'd from thy fall;
When fortune favour'd, or propitious heav'n
Smil'd on the better cauſe. Ill-fated pair!

Whom with this ſtream of pity here I lave;
But that my hoſtile hands imbru'd with gore
Muſt be ungrateful to your loathing ſhades,
From all the neighb'ring valleys would I cull
Their faireſt growth, and ſtrew your hearſe with flow'rs.
Yet O accept theſe tears and pious pray'rs!
May peace attend your aſhes! may your ſhades
Paſs o'er the ſilent pool to happier ſeats,
Where tyrants ne'er can enter to moleſt
The bliſsful region; but are far remov'd
To realms of horrour, where from righteous heav'n
They bear thoſe pains, they merit from mankind!
He ceas'd in tears. The captives leave the wall,
And ſlowly down Thermopylæ proceed.

End of the Sixth Book.

LEONIDAS:

BOOK VII.

The Argument.

The bodies of Teribazus and Ariana are brought into the preſence of Xerxes, ſoon after a report had reach'd the camp, that half his navy was ſhipwreck'd. The Perſian monarch, quite diſpirited, is perſuaded by Argeſtes, one of the ſatraps, to ſend an ambaſſador to the Spartan king. Argeſtes himſelf is deputed, who, after revealing his ambaſſy to Leonidas in ſecret, is by him led before the whole army, and there receives his anſwer. In the mean time Alpheus returns and declares, that the enemies were poſſeſs'd of the paſſages in the hills, and were haſtening to Thermopylæ, upon which Leonidas offers to ſend away all the army except his three hundred Spartans; but Diomedon, Demophilus, Dithyrambus, and Megiſtias refuſe to depart: he then diſmiſſes Argeſtes, informs the Grecians of his deſign to attack the Perſian camp in the night, and making all the neceſſary diſpoſitions retires to his pavilion.

BEFORE

BEFORE the tent of Xerxes now arriv'd
The Perſian captives. On with ſolemn pace
And ſlow they move. The monarch from afar
Deſcries their ſad demeanour. They approach,
Nor he forbids. That morn had Rumour told
The loſs of half his navy daſh'd on rocks
By angry blaſts, or buried in the ſurge.
Thus, when his bleeding ſiſter met his eyes,
Already ſunk in ſadneſs, he had loſt
His kingly pride, the parent of diſdain,
And cold indifference for others woes;
Nor ev'n beſide his ſiſter's nobler corſe
Her humble lover now his ſcorn awak'd.
In tears the captive's mournful tale he heard,
And then firſt knew compaſſion; but e're long
Thoſe traces vaniſh'd from the tyrant's breaſt:
His former gloom redoubles, for himſelf
His anxious boſom heaves, and now he fears,
Leſt he with all his numbers ſhould be caſt
A prey to Fortune. Near the monarch ſtood
The Spartan exile, whom he thus beſpake.
O DEMARATUS, what will fate ordain!
Lo! Fortune turns againſt me! Who ſhall know

How far her daring malice may extend,
Which rages now ſo near me, and hath made
My houſe the ſeat of ruin? I have ſent
From my unſhelter'd ſide my braveſt chiefs,
And choiceſt troops to paſs the deſart hill,
Led by this Malian; may not there the Greeks
With oppoſition more tremendous ſtill
And ruinous, than yeſter ſun beheld,
Reſiſtleſs hold their craggy poſt; renew
Their ſtony thunder with augmented rage,
And ſend whole quarries down the rocky ſteep
Again to cruſh my legions? Oh! unfold
Thy ſecret ſoul, nor hide the harſheſt truth;
Say what remains to hope? The exile here.

If truth unblam'd may iſſue from my lips,
Too well, imperial Xerxes, you preſage
What may befal your legions. If the Greeks
Arrang'd within Thermopylæ, a paſs
Acceſſible and ſpacious, could repel
With ſuch deſtruction their unnumber'd foes;
What ſcenes of havock muſt th' untrodden paths,
Confin'd among the craggy hills, afford?

Immers'd in care the monarch ſilent ſat.
Amid th' incircling peers Argeſtes ſtood.

A potent

A potent prince. On Sipylus he reign'd,
Whoſe lofty ſummits overlook'd the waves
Of Hermus and Pactolus; either ſtream
Enrich'd with golden ſands its tribute bore
To this great ſatrap: through the ſervile court
Yet was there none more practis'd in the arts
Of mean ſubmiſſion; none more ſkill'd to gain
The royal favour; none, who better knew
The phraſe, the looks, and geſture of a ſlave.
In ſoothing words he thus the king beſpake.

If Xerxes will to ſpare his faithful bands,
And not exert the terrours of his pow'r;
More gentle means of conqueſt than by arms,
Nor leſs ſecure may artifice ſupply.
Renown'd Darius, thy imperial ſire
Great in the ſpoil of kingdoms, long in vain
The fields of proud Euphrates with his hoſt
O'erſpread; at length confiding in the wiles
Of Zopyrus the mighty king ſubdu'd
The Babylonian tow'rs: but who ſhall count,
What num'rous ſtates by policy have fall'n;
And let corruption once her aid impart,
Not one ſhall ſtand. What race of men poſſeſs
Such probity and wiſdom, whom the veil

Of craft may blind not, nor corruption's charm
Seduce. O Xerxes, thou, whom heav'n hath rais'd
To more than mortal greatneſs, canſt thou find
Through all thy empire, which from India's ſhore
Shall reach Eurotas ſoon, no dazzling gift
To gain the Grecian leader? O diſpel
The cloud of ſadneſs from thoſe ſacred eyes,
And proffer ſtreight to Lacedæmon's chief,
What may thy own munificence declare,
And win his ſword to aid thee. Xerxes here,
Rous'd from his trance of ſorrow, ſwift replied.

Wise are thy words and counſels. Go, repair,
My faithful ſervant, to the Grecian chief;
Fall down before him; bid him join our arms,
And he ſhall reign o'er all the Grecian ſtates.

At once Argeſtes leaves the monarch's ſide.
He now approaches to the Phocian wall.
Thence Dithyrambus leads him to the tent
Of Lacedæmon's king. Retreated there
Alone the hero meditating ſat
On future woes to Perſia. At his feet
Prone bows Argeſtes, and begun. Thus low
Before thy awful preſence Xerxes wills,
That I ſhould bend me proſtrate to the earth,

And thus accoſt thee. Great and matchleſs chief,
By fortune favour'd, and belov'd by heav'n,
Thus ſays the lord of Aſia; join our arms,
And we reward thee with the ſov'reign rule
O'er all the pow'rful ſtates of haughty Greece.
And, O illuſtrious warriour, heed my words.
Think on the bliſs of royalty, the pomp
Of courts, their endleſs pleaſures, trains of ſlaves,
Who reſtleſs watch for thee and thy delights,
With all the glories of unrivall'd ſway.
Look on th' Ionic and Æolian Greeks
From them their fantom liberty is flown,
While in each province, rais'd by Xerxes' hand,
Some favour'd chief preſides (exalted ſtate,
Which envious freedom gives not) on his head
He bears the gorgeous diadem, and ſees
His equals once now proſtrate at his throne.
Yet how much greater thou, whom gen'ral Greece,
That teems with mightieſt ſtates, ſhall call her lord,
Thee only worthy. How will Greece rejoice
Around thy throne, and hail th' auſpicious hour,
When thou, ſelected by the Perſian king
To bleſs conſenting nations with thy ſway,

Didſt calm the fury of unſparing war,
Which elſe had delug'd all with blood and flames!
He ſaid. The chief replies not, but commands
The Theſpian youth, who near the tent had watch'd,
To ſummon all the Grecians. He obeys.
While from his ſeat the hero mov'd, and bade
The Perſian follow. He amaz'd attends,
Surrounded ſoon by all the Grecian bands;
When him the godlike Spartan thus beſpake.
Here, Perſian, tell thy ambaſſy, repeat,
That to obtain my friendſhip Aſia's lord
Bids me accept the ſov'reignty of Greece;
Then view this band, whoſe valour ſhall preſerve
That Greece unconquer'd, which your king beſtows,
And ſtrew your bodies on its crimſon plains:
The indignation painted on their looks,
And gen'rous ſcorn ſhall anſwer for their chief.
The hero ceas'd, when ſuddenly return'd
The ſpeed of Alpheus; all ſuſpended ſtreight
On him direct their ſight, who thus began.
E'er I could join the Phocians, from the hill,
Which overhung the cloſe defile, I view'd
The pow'rs of Perſia. Down the narrow ſtrait
No ſooner gleam'd th' innumerable ſpears,

But by our angry deſtiny miſled,
Or ſome curſt dæmon, enemy to Greece,
The Phocians quit their ſtation. Through the paſs
An inundation of Barbarians pours,
The traitor Epialtes is their guide,
And to Thermopylæ directs their courſe.
He here concludes. Unutterable fear
In horrid ſilence wrapt the liſt'ning throng,
Aghaſt, confounded; ſilent too were thoſe,
Who knew no terrour, yet with wonder mute,
Thick-wedg'd inclos'd Leonidas around,
Who thus with calmeſt elocution ſpoke.
I now behold my deſtiny compleat,
And how at laſt Leonidas muſt die.
Here with the Spartans ſhall I reſt behind
While you, my faithful, brave allies, retreat.
Then art thou near, thou glorious, ſacred hour,
Which ſhalt my country's liberty confirm!
All hail! thou ſolemn period! thee the tongues
Of Virtue, Fame, and freedom ſhall record,
And celebrate in ages yet unborn.
Then O farewel, Megiſtias wiſe and brave;
Thou too experienc'd, venerable chief,
Demophilus farewel: farewel to thee

Invincible

Invincible Diomedon, to thee
Unequall'd Dithyrambus, and to all,
You other dauntleſs warriours, who may claim
Praiſe from my lips, and friendſhip from my heart.
You after all the wonders, which your ſwords
Have here accompliſh'd, ſhall enrich your names
With freſh renown. Your valour muſt compleat,
What we begin. Here firſt the aſtoniſh'd foe
A dying Spartan ſhall with terrour view,
And tremble, while he conquers; then, by fate
Led from his dreadful victory diſmay'd
Againſt the phalanx of united Greece,
By your unconquer'd ſpears himſelf ſhall fall.
HERE interpos'd the fierce Platæan chief.
By the twelve Gods enthron'd in heav'n ſupreme,
By my fair name unſullied yet I ſwear,
Ne'er ſhall thy eyes, Leonidas, behold
Diomedon forſake thee. Firſt let ſtrength
Deſert my limbs, and valour ſhun my heart.
Did I not face the Marathonian war?
Have I not ſeen Thermopylæ? O Fame,
What more canſt thou beſtow, or I receive?
Where can I living purchaſe brighter praiſe,
Than dying here? A more illuſtrious tomb

Where can I gain, than underneath the heaps
Of Perſians fall'n the victims of our ſword.
He ended, when Demophilus ſubjoin'd.
O KING of Sparta, pride of human race,
Whom none e'er equall'd, but the ſeed of Jove,
Thy own forefather number'd with the Gods,
Lo! I am old. With faltring ſteps I tread
The prone deſcent of years. The winged hours
By me, as one unequal to their ſpeed,
Who can no more their fleeting joys attain,
Unheeding ſlide. My youth my country claim'd,
My age no more can ſerve her; what remains?
What eligible hope can wiſdom form,
But to die well? Upon this glorious earth
With thee, unrivall'd hero, will I cloſe
The eve of life. So ſpake the hoary chief,
When Dithyrambus next. O firſt of Greeks,
Me too think worthy to attend thy fame
With this moſt dear and venerable man
For ever honour'd from my tend'reſt age,
Ev'n till on life's extremity we part.
Nor too aſpiring let my hopes be deem'd;
Should the Barbarian in his triumphs mark
My youthful limbs among the gory heaps,

Thence

Thence may his fears be doubled, when again
He meets in fields hereafter to be known
The Grecian ſtandards, trembling at a foe,
To whom the flow'r and blooming joys of life
Are leſs alluring than a noble fate.

To him Demophilus. Wilt thou too bleed,
My Dithyrambus? But I here withhold
All counſel from thee, who art wiſe as brave.
If then thy magnanimity retain
Thee too with great Leonidas to fall,
At either's ſide our limbs ſhall preſs the ground,
And drop together in the arms of Death;
So if th' attentive traveller we draw
To our cold reliques, wondring ſhall he trace
The diff'rent ſcene, and pregnant with applauſe,
O wiſe old man, exclaim, thou well haſt choſe
The hour of fate: and O unequall'd youth,
Who to thy country didſt thy bloom devote,
Mayſt thou remain for ever dear to Fame!
May Time rejoice to name thee! and may Peace
With gentleſt pinions hover o'er thy urn!

This ſaid, the hero with his lifted ſhield
His face o'erſhades, and drops a ſecret tear;
Not this the tear of anguiſh, but deriv'd

From fond affection grown mature with time;
Which in a feebler mind to pain had turn'd,
But in the Theſpian's firm and virtuous breaſt,
Alone a manly tenderneſs awak'd
Unmix'd with pity, or with vain regret.
MEGISTIAS laſt addreſs'd the Spartan chief.
Thou, whom the Gods have choſen to exalt
Above mankind in virtue and renown,
O call not me preſumptuous, who implore
Among theſe heroes thy regardful ear!
To Lacedæmon I a ſtranger came.
You there preſerv'd me, there with honours clad;
Nor have I yet one benefit repay'd.
That now the gen'rous Spartans may behold
In me their high beneficence not vain,
Here to their cauſe I conſecrate my breath.
NOT ſo Megiſtias (interpos'd the king)
Thou and thy ſon retreat. Again the ſeer.
FORBID it, thou eternally ador'd,
O Jove, confirm my perſevering ſoul!
Nor let my fear neglect this happy hour
To ſhew the Spartans, I deſerv'd their care.
Thou, Menalippus, hear the king's command,
And my paternal tenderneſs revere.

Do thou withdraw thee from me, to my hand
Thy arms reſigning. Fortune will ſupply
Freſh toil for valour. Vanquiſh then, or find
A glorious grave; but ſpare thy father's eye
The bitter anguiſh to behold thy youth
Untimely bleed before him. Grief ſuſpends
His ſpeech, and interchangeably their arms
Impart their laſt embraces. Either wept,
The hoary parent, and the blooming ſon.
But from his temples the pontific wreath
Megiſtias now unlooſens, and reſigns
His hallow'd veſtments; while the youth with tears
The helmet buckles o'er his ſnowy locks,
And on his breaſt adjuſts the radiant mail.

WHILE ſuch contempt of life, ſuch fervid zeal
To die with glory animate the Greeks,
Far other thoughts poſſeſs Argeſtes' ſoul.
Amaze with mingled terrour ſmote his heart;
Cold drops, diſtill'd from ev'ry pore, bedew
His ſhiv'ring limbs; his boſom pants; his knees
Yield to their burthen; ghaſtly pale his cheeks,
Pale are his lips and trembling: ſuch the minds
Of ſlaves corrupt, to them the beauteous face

Of

Of Virtue turns to horrour. But the chief
Of Lacedæmon now the wretch beſpake.
RETURN to Xerxes; tell him on this rock
The Grecians faithful to their poſt await
His choſen myriads; tell him, thou haſt ſeen,
How far the luſt of empire is below
A free-born mind: and tell him, to behold
A tyrant humbled, and by virtuous death
To ſeal my country's freedom, is a good
Surpaſſing all, his boaſted pow'r can give.
HE ſaid, the Perſian haſtens through the paſs.
But now once more Diomedon aroſe.
Wrath overcaſts his forehead, while he ſpake.
YET more muſt ſtay and bleed. Inglorious Thebes
Ne'er ſhall receive her traitors back, but here
Shall they attone their perfidy by death
Ev'n from their ſwords, to whom their abject hearts
Have ſacrific'd their faith. Nor dare to hope,
Ye vile deſerters of the public weal,
Ye coward ſlaves, that mingled with the heaps
Of thoſe, who periſh in their country's cauſe,
You ſhall your ſhame conceal. Whoe'er ſhall paſs
Along this field of glorious ſlain, and trace
With veneration ev'ry nobler corſe;

His ſoul, though warm with generous applauſe,
A while ſhall curb the tranſport to repeat
Its execrations o'er your impious heads,
On whom that fate, which gives to others fame,
Is infamy and vengeance. Dreadful thus
On the pale Thebans ſentence he pronounc'd,
Like Rhadamanthus, from th' infernal throne
When with inexorable frowns he doom'd
The guilty dead to ever-during pain;
While Phlegethon its flaming billows roll'd
Before their ſight, and ruthleſs furies ſhook
Their hiſſing ſerpents. All the Greeks aſſent
With clamours echoing through the concave rock.

Forth Anaxander in th' aſſembly ſtood,
And thus began with indignation feign'd.
If yet your clamours, Grecians, are allay'd,
Behold, I ſtand before you to demand,
Why theſe my brave companions, who alone
Of all the Thebans under my command
Durſt force their paſſage through diſſuading crouds
To join your hoſt, ſhould now be traitors deem'd;
Accus'd by one alone, a baniſh'd wretch,
Whom Lacedæmon in her anger drove
Far from her confines; one, who meanly ſought

A ſervile court for ſhelter: has he drawn
Such virtues thence, that Sparta, who before
Held him unworthy of his native ſoil,
Should truſt him now before auxiliar friends?
Injurious Greeks! we ſcorn the thought of flight.
Let Aſia bring her millions; unconſtrain'd
We wait the conflict, and for Greece will die.

Thus in the garb of virtue he adorn'd
Neceſſity, deluding ev'ry Greek
Except Laconia's hero. He perceiv'd
Through all its fair diſguiſe the traitor's heart.
So, when at firſt mankind in ſcience rude
Rever'd the moon, as bright with native beams,
Some ſage, that walk'd with Nature through her works,
By Wiſdom led, diſcern'd, the various orb
Itſelf was dark, in foreign ſplendours clad.
Now unexpected with his troop return'd
Dieneces, and thus to Sparta's king.

I need not tell thee, that the Perſian pow'rs
Have paſs'd the ſecret ſtrait. This night they halt,
But with the morning will invade us here.
We come to die with thee. United thus,
Our ſtrength a fiercer conteſt ſhall maintain;

Whence a more bright example to our friends,
And ſtronger terrour of the Grecian name.
He ſaid, when thus Leonidas began.
O Spartans, hear, and all you other Greeks,
Whoſe matchleſs virtue ſhall inroll your names
In Time's eternal records, and inhance
Your country's luſtre; lo! the ſetting ſun
Inflames the broad horizon. All retire,
And in your tents invoke the pow'r of ſleep
To aid your vigour, and to give your limbs
Unwearied patience of continued toil;
But when the ſecond watch begins, let all
With mutual exhortation rouſe to arms:
For ſoon, as Cynthia from the vault of heav'n
Hath hung her ſhining lamp, through Aſia's hoſt
Shall death with horrour and amazement rage.
Their camp is open to our ſwords, depriv'd
Of all its choſen warriours. But I charge
All, ev'n the Spartans, who are maim'd, or weak,
To pain, or toil unequal, from our camp
This hour to haſten. You, our brave allies
Of Corinth, Phlius, with th' Arcadian bands
And Mycenæans muſt not yet return,

But here, while we repoſe, in arms remain;
When we our tents abandon, then depart.
He ſaid, all heard obedient, and diſpers'd;
While to his tent the godlike chief repairs,
And with him Agis, whom he thus beſpake.
O Agis, hear and mark my laſt command.
With wary skill diſpoſe the nightly guard,
That no deſerter from the Theban tents
May reach the camp of Aſia, or aſcend
To thoſe now halting on the neighb'ring hills:
Nor yet with us the faithleſs band muſt join.
Not with ſuch baſe aſſociates muſt we truſt
Our great deſign. Their perfidy might ſoon
Find means to rouſe the unſuſpecting foe,
And all our glorious enterpriſe confound.
Then, O my faithful Agis, e're we move,
While on the ſolemn ſacrifice intent,
As Lacedæmon's ſacred laws ordain,
Our pray'rs we offer to the tuneful nine,
Do thou in whiſpers charge the Theban train
Slow and in ſilence to diſperſe and fly.
This ſaid, they parted. On his couch alone
Reclines the hero, where he thus revolves.

My fate is now impending. O my heart!
What more auſpicious period could I chuſe
For death, than now; when beating high with joy
Thou tell'ſt me, I am happy? If to live,
Or die, as Virtue dictates, be to know
The pureſt bliſs; if ſhe her charms diſplay
Still beauteous, ſtill unfading, ſtill ſerene
To youth, to age, to death; whatever be
Thoſe other climes of uncorruptive joy,
Which Heav'n in dark futurity conceals,
Still here, O Virtue, thou art all our good.
Then what a black, unſpeakable reverſe
The wretched offspring of Injuſtice prove?
What in the ſtruggle of departing day,
When life's laſt glimpſe extinguiſhing preſents
Th' unknown, inextricable gloom of death?
But can I paint the terrours of a breaſt,
Where guilt reſides? Leonidas forego
The horrible conception, ſeek again
Thy own untroubled heart, and grateful bow
To thoſe benignant pow'rs, who fram'd thy mind
In crimes unfruitful, never to admit
The black impreſſion of a guilty thought.
Elſe could I fearleſs thus relinquiſh life?

No. Such unſhaken calmneſs from th' unjuſt
Is ever abſent. Oft in them the rage
Of ſome prevailing paſſion for a time
Suppreſſes fear. Oft hurried on they loſe
The ſenſe of danger, when dominion, pow'r,
And purple pomp their dazzled ſight enchant.
Yet ſtill the joys of life alone they ſeek.
But he, who calmly meets reſiſtleſs fate,
When glory only, and the gen'ral good
Invite him forward, muſt poſſeſs a ſoul,
Which all content deducing from itſelf
Can by unerring virtue's conſtant light
Diſcern, when death is worthy of his choice.
The man thus great and happy, in the ſcope
Of his large mind is ſtretch'd beyond his date;
Ev'n on this ſhore of being he in thought
Supremely bleſs'd anticipates the good,
Which late poſterity from him derives.
THE hero clos'd his meditation here.
The ſwelling tranſports of his mind ſubſide
In ſoft oblivion, while the ſilken plumes
Of ſleep envelop his extended limbs.

End of the Seventh Book.

LEONIDAS:

BOOK VIII.

The Argument.

Leonidas riſing about three hours before midnight relates to an aſſembly of the leaders a dream, which is interpreted by Megiſtias; he then arms himſelf, and marches in proceſſion with his whole troop to an altar newly rais'd on a neighbouring meadow, and there offers a ſacrifice to the Muſes: he invokes the aſſiſtance of thoſe Goddeſſes, he animates his companions, and then placing himſelf at their head leads them againſt the enemy in the dead of the night.

SCARCE was begun the ſecond watch of night,
When his pavilion Agis left, and fought
The chief of Lacedæmon. Him he found
Spread on his tranquil couch, while, o'er his face

Diffus

Diffus'd, a glad ſerenity with ſmiles
His ſlumber painted; like an ev'ning ſky
Yet ſtreak'd with ruddy light, when ſummer ſuns
Have veil'd their beaming foreheads. Tranſport fill'd
The eye of Agis. Friendſhip ſwell'd his heart,
And veneration. On his knee inclin'd
The hero's hand he kiſs'd, and thus began.

O THOU with more than human virtues great,
Accept this homage! and may gentle ſleep
Yet longer cloſe thy eyelids, that unblam'd
I thus may bow before thee. Thus he ſpake,
And, proſtrate bent, his godlike friend rever'd,
Whoſe eye the ſhades of ſlumber now forſake.
So, when new riſing heav'n's reſplendent orb
Illumines firſt the ſable ſkirts of night,
The white-rob'd Magi, or the Indian ſeers
Are ſeen from Ganges, or Euphrates' ſide,
Before th' emerging glory bow'd to hail
The radiant emblem of th' immortal mind.

BOTH heroes roſe, and mix'd their friendly arms,
And now to Agis had the Spartan king
Diſclos'd his ſoul; when lo! the Grecian chiefs,
All rous'd, advancing with the ſudden gleam
Of armour pierc'd the twilight ſhade. With joy

Leonidas accoſts them. O thrice hail!
My virtuous friends. Approach, and all attend,
While I relate, and you with wonder hear.
This night no ſooner ſleep oppreſs'd my brows,
But o'er my head the empyreal form
Of my great ſire Alcides ſeem'd diſplay'd.
I ſaw his magnitude divine; his voice
I heard, his ſolemn mandate to ariſe.
I roſe. He bade me follow: I obey'd.
Up to a mountain, whoſe ethereal brow
Th' involving clouds divided, we aſcend.
E're long we reſted, ſuddenly the howl
Of wolves, and dogs, the vulture's piercing ſhriek,
The yell of ev'ry beaſt and fowl of prey,
Within my ears diſcordant broke. I turn'd.
When lo! a ſurface all with gore deform'd
Beyond my view illimitable ſtretch'd,
One vaſt expanſe of horrour. There a corſe,
Which with its huge dimenſions ſeem'd to hide
Th' unbounded plain, lay welt'ring, red with wounds
Delv'd in th' enormous limbs, which bleeding gorg'd
The vulture's famine. Wond'ring I beheld,
When from behind I heard a ſecond ſound,
Like ſurges tumbling o'er a craggy ſhore.

Again

Again I turn'd. An ocean there appear'd
With riven keels, and ſhrouds, and ſhiver'd oars,
With arms, and mangled carcaſes beſtrewn
Innumerous. The billows foam'd with blood,
And whelm'd a crimſon deluge o'er the ſtrand.
But where the waters unobſerv'd before
Between two adverſe ſhores contracting roll'd
A ſtormy tide, upon the beach, forlorn,
One of majeſtic ſtature I deſcried
In ornaments imperial. Oft on me
He bent his clouded eye-balls. On my name
With imprecations oft he call'd aloud,
Then rent his ſplendid garments, and his head
In rage diveſted of its graceful hairs.
Impatient now he ey'd a ſlender ſkiff,
Which mounted on the curling foam approach'd.
With indignation, and reluctant grief
Once more his ſight reverting, he embark'd
Amid the perils of the frowning waves.
O thou, whoſe virtue rank'd thee with the Gods
(I here exclaim'd) inſtruct me what produc'd
This deſolation; when the God return'd.
Let thy aſtoniſh'd eye again review
What thou didſt late abhor. I look'd and ſaw

A land, where Plenty with diſporting hand
Pour'd all the fruits of Amalthea's horn;
Where bloom'd the olive, and the cluſtring vine
With its broad foliage mantled ev'ry hill;
Where Ceres with exuberance inrob'd
The pregnant boſom of the fields in gold;
Where ſpacious towns, whoſe circuits proud contain'd
The dazling works of wealth, unnumber'd ſhone,
The ſtrength and ſplendour of the peopled land.
Then in a moment clouds obſcur'd my ſight,
And all was vaniſh'd from my waking eyes.

THRICE we ſalute the omen (thus began
The ſage Megiſtias) in thy myſtic dream
I ſee the Grecian victories. The earth,
The deep ſhall own their triumphs; and the tears
Of Aſia, and of Libya ſhall bewail
Their offspring caſt before the vulture's beak,
And all the monſtrous natives of the main.
Thoſe joyous fields of plenty ſhall be Greece
Enrich'd with conqueſt, and Barbarian ſpoils.
And whom thou ſaw'ſt in regal veſture clad
Print on the ſands his ſolitary ſteps,
Is Xerxes foil'd and fugitive from Greece.

MEGISTIAS

MEGISTIAS thus, while ev'ry boſom felt
Enthuſiaſtic rapture, joy beyond
All ſenſe, and all conception but of thoſe,
Who die to ſave their country. Here again
Leonidas th' exulting chiefs addreſs'd.

SINCE happineſs from virtue is deriv'd,
Who for his country dies, that moment proves
Moſt happy, as moſt virtuous. Such our lot.
To this the gods ſhall add eternal fame.
But now go forth, Megiſtias, and with ſpeed
Prepare the victim, and the ſacred flames;
That to the Muſes, as the Spartan law
Commands, our pray'rs and off'rings may be paid,
E're to yon camp our hoſtile feet we bend.
But, O remember, from the ſolemn rites
Let ev'ry ſound be abſent, not the pipe,
Nor ev'n the muſic-breathing flute be heard.
Meantime, ye leaders, ev'ry band inſtruct
To move in ſilence, nor with ſhouts alarm
The midnight ſtillneſs. Mindful of their charge
The chiefs depart. Leonidas provides
His various armour. Firſt the breaſtplate arms
His ample cheſt. O'er this the hero ſpreads
The mailed cuiraſs from his ſhoulders hung.

The ſhining belt infolds his mighty loins.
Next on his ſtately temples he erects
The plumed helm, then graſps his pond'rous ſhield;
Where nigh the center on the ſwelling braſs
Th' inimitable artiſt had imboſs'd
The ſhape of great Alcides, whom to gain
Two Goddeſſes contended. Pleaſure here
Won with ſoft wiles th' attracted eye, and there
The form of Virtue dignified the ſcene.
In her majeſtic ſweetneſs was diſclos'd
The mind ſublime and happy. From her lips
Seem'd eloquence to flow. With looks ſerene,
But fix'd intent upon the ſon of Jove,
She wav'd her hand, where winding to the ſkies
Her paths aſcended. On the ſummit ſtood
Fame, and protended her eternal trump,
Incumbent on a trophy near to heav'n.
The youth attentive to her wiſdom own'd
The prevalence of Virtue; while his eye
With all the ſpirit, which redeem'd the world
From tyranny and monſters, ardent flam'd;
Not undeſcried by Pleaſure, where ſhe lay
Stretch'd on a gorgeous carpet, which beſpread
The meadow with magnificence. Around

Were flourets ſtrewn, and wantonly in rills
Soft ſtreams mæander'd. All relax'd her limbs:
Nor wanting yet ſolicitude to gain,
What loſt ſhe fear'd, as ſtruggling with deſpair
She ſeem'd collecting all her power of charms,
And with exceſs of ſweet allurement ſmil'd:
In vain; for Virtue ſway'd Alcides' mind.
Hence all his labours. Trac'd with various art
They fill'd the ſurface of the ſpacious targe.
This portraiture of glory on his arm
Leonidas ſupports. Then forth he tow'rs
From his pavilion. With their troops array'd
The chiefs attended. Flaming torches blaz'd
In ev'ry hand. And now with ſilent pace
All to the ſolemn ſacrifice proceed.
Firſt Polydorus with the hallow'd knife,
And barley ſtrew'd with ſacred ſalt advanc'd.
Diomedon beſide him, in his graſp
A weighty mace ſuſtaining. Like the reſt
All bright in armour with his ſhield and ſpear
Megiſtias follow'd, an unſpotted prieſt,
And dauntleſs warriour. From on high his helm
With wreaths around the ſhining creſt reveal'd
His ſacerdotal honours. By the horns,

Where laurels twin'd, with Alpheus Maron leads
The conſecrated ox. And lo! behind
Leonidas approaches. Ne'er before
With ſuch tranſcending majeſty he trod,
Nor his own virtue, as that hour, enjoy'd.
Then venerable moves the Theſpian chief,
And great Dieneces. To them the bloom
Of Dithyrambus glowing with the ſenſe
Of future praiſe ſucceeds, with graceful ſteps
The gen'rous Agis next; the Thebans laſt
Repining and inglorious. Then ſlow march
The hoſt all mute, nor ſhake their brazen arms.

Not from Thermopylæ remote the hills
Of Oeta yielding to a fruitful dale
Within their ſide half-circling had inclos'd
A fair expanſe with verdure ſmooth. The bounds
Were edg'd with wood o'erlook'd by ſnowy cliffs,
Which from the clouds bent frowning. From a rock
Above the loftieſt ſummit of the groves
A tumbling torrent wore the ſhagged ſtone,
Then gleaming through the interwoven ſhade
The valley water'd. O'er the level ſhone
Its glaſſy boſom, and with placid waves
The ſmiling lawn divided. Near the banks,

Which

Which flow'rs made various, new-erected ſtood
A ruſtic altar, which a choſen train,
Appointed by Megiſtias, rais'd with turf
Cut by their falchions from the verdant mead:
Broad was the ſurface, high with piles of wood,
The plenteous tribute of th' adjacent groves,
All interſpers'd with laurel. Here a vaſe
Fill'd with the briny waters of the ſea,
(More pure than ev'ry ſtream, or fountain, deem'd)
Was plac'd beſide the altar. There with wine
Unmix'd capacious goblets ſtood arrang'd.
Here is the victim brought. Megiſtias ſtreight
His helm unlooſens. With his hoary head
Uncover'd round the ſolemn pile he treads,
And with a branch of laurel ſcatters wide
The ſacred moiſture of the main. His hand
With mingled ſalt and barely next beſtrews
The altar, and the victim. O'er the horns
Th' inverted goblet foaming with the grape
Diffus'd the rich libation. Now advanc'd
Diomedon. Megiſtias gave command.
Down ſunk the victim with a deathful ſtroke,
Nor groan'd. Megiſtias buries in the throat
The hallow'd ſteel. A crimſon deluge flows,

Swift from the limbs the fuming hide is torn,
The fleſh diſſever'd on the altar heap'd.
Now ſmoaks the pile, then ſudden flames abroad.
A burſt of ſplendour diſſipates the dark.
Greece throngs around. Each lifts a ſparkling brand
With beaming javelins intermix'd, and ſhields,
And poliſh'd helms, which multiply the blaze.
Meantime the great Leonidas drew nigh,
And ſtood before the altar. There his helm
Unclaſp'd to Agis he commits, his ſhield
And ſpear to Dithyrambus, then his arms
Extending thus in ſupplication ſpoke.

HARMONIOUS daughters of Olympian Jove,
Who on the top of Helicon ador'd,
And high Parnaſſus, with delighted ears
Bend to the warble of Caſtalia's wave,
And Aganippe's murmurs, if from thence
We muſt invoke your preſence; or along
The ridge of neighb'ring Pindus if your ſteps
Now wander through your conſecrated bow'rs,
Thence turn, ye Muſes, nor for once diſdain
Each with her beauteous form theſe hills to grace,
And ſtand th' immortal witneſs of our fate!
But with you bring fair Liberty, whom Jove

And you moſt honour. Let her ſacred eyes
Approve her dying Grecians, let her voice
With exultation tell the earth and heav'ns,
Theſe are her ſons; then ſtrike your tuneful ſhells,
And with our praiſe bid harmony rejoice.
Record us guardians of our parents age,
Our matrons virtue, and our infants bloom,
And glorious bulwarks of our country's laws,
Who ſhall ennoble the hiſtorian's page,
Or on the joyous feſtival inſpire
With loftier ſtrains the virgins choral ſong.
Then, O celeſtial maids, on yonder camp
Let night ſit heavy, and a ſleep, like death,
Weigh down the eye of Aſia! O infuſe
A cool, untroubled ſpirit in our breaſts,
Which may in ſilence guide our daring feet
Through all the paths of ſlaughter, nor affright
The dark with tumult, till the dying groans
Of gaſping tyrants into horrour wake
The midnight calm! Then turn Deſtruction wild.
Bid Terrour and Confuſion revel round,
And in one carnage heap the Barb'rous ranks,
Their horſe, and chariots. Let the ſpurning ſteed
Imbrue his hoofs with blood, and ſhatter'd cars

Cruſh with their brazen weight the proſtrate necks
Of kings, and purpled chiefs incircled round
By nations fall'n.—You, countrymen and friends,
My laſt commands attend. Your gen'ral's voice
Once more ſalutes you, not to rouſe the brave,
Or minds reſolv'd and dauntleſs to confirm.
Too well by this expiring blaze I view
Impatient valour flaſh from ev'ry eye.
But temper well your ardour, and your lips
Cloſe on the riſing tranſport. Lo! how ſleep
Hath folded millions in its black embrace.
No ſound is wafted from th' unnumber'd foe.
The winds themſelves are ſilent. All conſpires
To this great ſacrifice, where thouſands ſoon
Shall only wake to die. Perhaps our ſwords
This night may ſend ev'n Xerxes' ſelf to lead
Th' innumerable train of Perſian ghoſts
To Pluto's dreary ſhade, unleſs reſerv'd
From all this ruin, to lament his ſhame,
And future flight, when Greece confounds that pow'r,
Which we will ſhake. But now the ſecond watch
Is verging to its period, and the moon
Prepares to glimmer on our darkſome ſteps.
Let each his head diſtinguiſh with a wreath

Of

Of twining laurel, then the goblet crown,
And ſhare the victim. Take your laſt repaſt,
For with your fathers, and the heroes old
You next ſhall banquet in the bleſt abodes.
WHILE thus the hero, through the thronging files
Preſenting round a hideous depth of war
All ſhook with ardour their erected ſpears
Thick, as the fruitful growth of lofty pines,
Which from high Pelion's cloud-inveſted brow
To heav'n's blue vault their ſtately honours bear.
Megiſtias ſoon through all the band divides
The ſacred laurel: ſnatch'd with eager zeal,
By ev'ry hand, and round each helmet wove
It blends its verdure with the floating plumes.
Then is the victim portion'd, while the bowl
Flows with the vine's impurpled ſtream. Aloof
The Theban train in wan dejection mute
Brood o'er their ſhame, or caſt a frighted eye
On that determin'd virtue, which unmov'd
At fate's approach with chearful lips could taſte
The ſparkling goblet, and with joy partake
That laſt and glorious banquet. Ev'n the heart
Of Anaxander now forgets its wiles,
Its fear no more diſſembling. Agis here -

For ever mindful of his friend's command
Mix'd with the Thebans, and in whiſpers thus.
LEONIDAS permits you to retire.
While in the rites of ſacrifice employ'd
None heed your motions. Separate, and fly
With ſilent ſteps. At once the Theban troop
Its ranks diſſolving from the Greeks withdraws.
Unſeen it moulders from the hoſt, like ſnow,
Which from the mountains in ten thouſand rills,
Soon as the ſun exerts his orient beam,
Deſcends ſoft-trickling, while the hoary heap
Inſenſibly decays. The Grecians ſoon
Conclude the ſolemn banquet, and their chief
Now reaſſumes his arms. Before his ſtep
The croud rolls backward. In their gladden'd ſight
His creſt irradiate with th' uplifted brands
Its purple ſplendour ſhakes. The tow'ring oak
Thus from a lofty promontory waves
Its majeſty of verdure, while with joy
The ſailor marks its heav'n-aſcending pride,
Which from afar directs his foamy courſe
Along the pathleſs Ocean: ſo the Greeks
Exulting gaz'd, as down their op'ning ranks
Their chief proceeds; from whoſe majeſtic grace

A ſoul like thine, O Phidias, might conceive
In Parian marble, or effulgent braſs,
The form of great Apollo; when the God,
Won by the pray'rs of man's afflicted race,
In arms forſook his lucid throne to pierce
The monſter Python in the Delphian vale.
Cloſe by the hero Polydorus waits
To guide deſtruction through the Aſian tents.
As the young eagle near his parent's ſide
In wanton flight eſſays his vig'rous wings,
E're long with her to penetrate the clouds,
To dart impetuous on the fleecy train,
And dye his beak with gore; by Sparta's king
The injur'd Polydorus thus prepares
His arm for death, and feaſts his angry ſoul
With promis'd vengeance: his impatient thoughts
Ev'n now tranſport him furious to the ſeat
Of his long ſorrows not with ſhackled hands,
But now once more a Spartan with his ſhield,
And dreadful ſpear to lead his country's bands,
And with them vengeance. Nor the reſt of Greece
Neglect to form. Their helmets now unite
Their various plumage, as th' intwining boughs
Mix their broad foliage in Dodona's grove;

Or like the cedars on the Syrian hills,
Which with their ſhady texture, as with night,
The gloomy ſoil o'ercaſt. In order'd ranks
While thus they ſtand, behold a warlike form
In gleaming arms ſlow-moving through the ſhade,
Led by a ſlave, approach'd Laconia's king,
And thus addreſs'd him. O Leonidas,
Thou ſeeſt before thee Eurytus, a name
To thee and ev'ry Spartan not unknown.
Thy ruling voice forbade the maim'd to ſtay;
I, whoſe dark orbs no longer know the ſun,
Immers'd in ſudden blindneſs ſince our march
From Lacedæmon, with the reſt withdrew,
Not to reviſit Sparta, but, reſolv'd
To meet the Perſians, in the public way
I ſat; not long, before th' increaſing ſound
Of trampling feet alarm'd me, which I deem'd
Were Perſia's numbers ruſhing from the hills:
I ſtarted upward graſping in my hand
My ſpear and buckler, by my ſlave withheld,
Who told me, they were Thebans. Lo! I bear
The tydings of their flight. And now, my chief
And countrymen, farewel. Do you proceed,
With death and terrour fill the hoſtile camp;

While I the fury of th'exulting foe
Deſcending from the mountains here await
To yield the laſt remains of tedious life
Now to my country uſeleſs, and to me,
And cloſe theſe ſhaded eyes in endleſs night.
He ceas'd, when thus Leonidas began.
Then ſtay, my faithful ſoldier, and obtain
Not the leaſt honours in this glorious night;
And you, my brave aſſociates, all exult;
One ſpirit now inſpires us; from our band
Doubt, fear, and treaſon with the Thebans fly:
While all with mutual confidence advance,
And equal fires. This ſaid, once more the king
On the deep phalanx his attentive eye
Reverts, and through the ruddy gleam deſcries
One face of gladneſs; but th' illuſtrious van
He moſt contemplates: Agis, Alpheus there,
Megiſtias, Maron, and Platæa's chief,
Dieneces, Demophilus are drawn,
And Dithyrambus. They their fixed ſight
On him too bend with inexpreſſive joy,
With love, and veneration, till they hear
His laſt command; when inſtant to the earth
Are caſt th' extinguiſh'd brands. On all around

Drops

Drops ſudden darkneſs, on the hills, the woods,
The ſilver ſtream, the rocks, and floating main.
It now was midnight. To the hoſtile camp
With ſteps compos'd and ſilent down the paſs
The phalanx moves. Each patient boſom huſh'd
Its ſtruggling ſpirit, nor in whiſpers breath'd
The rapt'rous ardour, virtue then inſpir'd;
But all await the moment doom'd to give
The Barb'rous millions to their deathful ſteel:
So low'ring clouds expanding from the north
A while ſuſpend their horrours, deſtin'd ſoon
To blaze in lightnings, and to burſt in ſtorms.

End of the Eighth Book.

LEONIDAS:

BOOK IX.

The Argument.

Leonidas and the Grecians penetrate through the Perſian camp to the very pavilion of Xerxes, who avoids deſtruction by flight. The Barbarians are ſlaughter'd in great multitudes, and their camp is ſet on fire. Leonidas conducts his men back to Thermopylæ, engages the Perſians, who were deſcended from the hills, and after numberleſs proofs of ſuperiour ſtrength and valour ſinks down cover'd with wounds, and expires the laſt of all the Grecian commanders.

THE waining moon diſplay'd her gleaming horns,
When o'er th' unguarded bound of Aſia's camp
Now paſs'd the Grecians. Through th' unnumber'd tents,
Where all was mute and tranquil, they purſue
Their ſilent march. The eaſtern world around
Lay ſtretch'd in ſlumber, motionleſs, and deaf,
Wrapt in the dead ſecurity of night,

Nor

Nor mark'd the ſteps of Fate. The wary Greeks
By Polydorus guided ſtill proceed.
Ev'n to the center of the extenſive hoſt
Unſeen they pierc'd, when now th' imperial tent
Yet diſtant roſe before them. Wide around
The proud pavilion ſtretch'd an ample ſpace,
Where myriads might imbattle. Here a band
Of choſen Perſians watchful round their king
Held their nocturnal ſtation. As the hearts
Of anxious nations menac'd with the waſte
Of meager famine, and the ruthleſs ſword
Sink in their frozen boſoms, while deſpair
Sees fear-ingender'd fantoms in the ſky,
Aërial hoſts amid the clouds array'd,
Which ſeem to ſhake the firmament with war,
Portending woe and death; the Perſians thus
Are ſmote with conſternation, as the moon
By her faint beam diſcover'd from afar
The glimpſe of Grecian arms. With ſudden cries
They waken Horrour, which to Xerxes' couch,
And o'er th' aſtoniſh'd hoſt, ſwift-winged flew
Diſpelling ſleep and ſilence. All the camp
Pours forth its numbers naked, pale, unarm'd,
Wild with amazement, blinded by diſmay,

To

To ev'ry foe obnoxious; when at once
Plung'd in ten thouſand breaſts the Grecian ſteel
Reeks with deſtruction. Deluges of blood
Float o'er the field, and foam around the heaps
Of wretches ſlain unconſcious of the hand,
Which mows them down by legions. From his couch
The lord of Aſia, and of Libya ſtarts,
(Amaze, affright, diſtraction in his look)
And ſees in thought united Greece advance.
Where then was fled the empty pride of kings,
The hope of glory, and the luſt of pow'r?
What then avail'd th' innumerable range
Of thy huge camp ſave only to conceal
Thy trembling ſteps, O Xerxes, while thou flieſt.
Leonidas before the Grecian van
Through bleeding thouſands hews his dreadful way.
Before him Terrour ſtrides. Gigantic Death,
And Deſolation at his ſide attend,
With all the Furies of inſatiate war.
To Xerxes' tent the hero ſpeeds, nor finds
His victim. Ardent throngs of Grecians fill
The ſtately manſion; to the ground are hurld
The glitt'ring enſigns of imperial pow'r:
The diadem, the ſcepter, late ador'd

And fear'd by millions, underneath their feet
With mingled rage and ſcorn the Grecians cruſh,
A ſacrifice to Freedom. Now return
The furious bands. Leonidas exalts
For new deſtruction his reſiſtleſs ſpear,
When ſudden night o'erſhrouds the ſpangled heav'ns,
And clouds condenſing intercept the moon.
Black o'er the furrow'd main the raging eaſt
In whirlwinds ſweeps the ſurge. Now roars the coaſt,
The craſhing foreſts, and the cavern'd rocks.
Swift through the camp the hurricane impells
Its dire career, when Aſia's numbers, veil'd
Amid the ſhelt'ring horrours of the ſtorm,
Evade the Spartan lance. The Grecians halt,
By great Leonidas reſtrain'd, and wait
Near Xerxes' tent their mighty leader's will.

Beside the high pavilion from the time,
That Xerxes near Thermopylæ had drawn
His num'rous bands, perpetual fire had ſhone;
Before whoſe ſacred light the Perſian lord
Was wont among his Magi to adore
The power of Oromaſdes: piles of wood
Lay nigh, prepar'd to feed the conſtant flame.
Theſe on the altar by the Greeks are ſtrewn,

So wills Laconia's hero; while the winds
Excite the blaze, his phalanx he divides;
Four bands are form'd by Dithyrambus led,
By Alpheus, by Diomedon, the laſt
Himſelf commands. The word is giv'n; the Greeks
Preſs to the fire; ſoon ſhrink the burning heaps;
Deſtructive flames they brandiſh, and injoin'd
To reaſſemble at the regal tent,
By various paths the hoſtile camp invade.
RESISTLESS deſolation now involves
The Malian fields, as o'er the eaſtern tents
From diff'rent ſtations flew ten thouſand brands
Hurl'd by the Greeks unreſpited. The winds
With violence redoubled breathing round
Tempeſtuous rage exaſperate the blaze.
The conflagration, like a ſea, expands;
Collected now from ev'ry part it forms
One waving ſurface of unbounded fire.
In ruddy volumes mount the curling flames
To heav'n's dark vault, and paint the midnight clouds.
So, when the north emits its purpled lights,
The undulating radiance ſtreaming wide,
As with a burning canopy, inveſts
Th' ethereal concave. Oeta now diſclos'd

Its forehead glitt'ring with eternal froſt,
While down the rocks the foamy torrents ſhone.
Far o'er the main the pointed rays were thrown;
Night ſnatch'd her mantle from the ocean's breaſt;
The billows glimmer from the diſtant ſhores.
But where aſcends a pillar huge of ſmoke
With wreathing flames incircled, Horrour there
And Death on great Leonidas attend.
He bade th' exulting Polydorus lead,
Where Aſia's horſe and chariots ſtood arrang'd;
There at his word devouring Vulcan feaſts
On all the tribute, which Theſſalia's meads
Yield to the ſcythe, and riots on the heaps
Of Ceres emptied of the ripen'd grain.
A flood of fire envelops all the ground;
The cordage burſts of ev'ry blazing tent;
Down ſink the roofs, and overwhelm the throng
Of wretches panting from the Spartan ſword,
Cloſe-wedg'd with fear; the Libyan chariot burns,
Th' Arabian camel, and the Perſian ſteed
Bound through the fiery deluge; wild with pain
They ſhake their finged manes, with madding hoofs
Daſh through the blood of thouſands mix'd with flames,
That rage augmented by the whirlwind's blaſt.

MEANTIME the ſcepter'd lord of half the globe
Through the wide tumult, like a guilty ſlave,
From tent to tent precipitates his flight.
Diſpers'd are all his ſatraps; Pride itſelf
Shuns his dejected brow; Deſpair alone
With pale Confuſion, and with frantic Fear
Wait on th' imperial fugitive, and ſhew,
As round the camp his eye diſtracted roves,
No limits to deſtruction. Now was ſeen
Aurora mounting from the eaſtern hills
In roſy ſandals, and with dewy locks:
The winds ſubſide before her, darkneſs flies,
And ſtreams of light proclaim the chearful day.
When now at Xerxes' tent the Grecian band
Was reunited. What could Fortune more
To aid the valiant, and to gorge revenge?
Lo! Deſolation o'er the Perſian hoſt
Hath emptied all its horrours; ev'n the hand
Of languid ſlaughter drops its crimſon ſteel;
Nor Nature longer can ſuſtain the toil
Of ever-during conqueſt. Yet what pow'r
Among the Grecians once again reviv'd
Their drooping warmth; new-brac'd their nerves and call'd
Their wearied ſwords to deeds of brighter fame?

What, but th' inſpiring hope of glorious death
To crown their labour, and th' auſpicious look
Of their heroic chief, which ſtill unchang'd,
Still with ſuperiour majeſty declar'd
No toil had yet relax'd his matchleſs ſtrength,
Nor worn the vigour of his godlike ſoul.
Down to the paſs with gentle march he leads
Th' imbattled warriours. There behind the ſhrubs,
Which near the verdant feet of Oeta ſprung,
Beſide the entrance of the ſtraits the Greeks
In ambuſh lay. The tempeſt now was calm'd;
Soft breezes only from the Malian wave
O'er each grim face beſmear'd with ſmoke and gore
Their cool refreſhment breath'd. The healing gale
Diſpells the languor from their haraſs'd limbs,
Which ſwell with ſtrength returning. After all
Th' inceſſant labours of the horrid night
Through flames and war continu'd, they prepare
In order'd battle to confront the pow'rs
Of Hyperanthes, that ſelected band
From Aſia's numbers, deſtin'd with the morn
To paſs the mountains in triumphant march
With ſtrength unwaſted, and with ſouls elate.
Not long the Greeks in expectation ſtood

Impatient.

Impatient. Sudden with tumultuous ſhouts,
Like Nile's ſwift current, where with deafning roar
Prone from the ſteep of Elephantis falls
Its ſea of waters, Hyperanthes pours
His rapid legions o'er the Grecian camp
Down from the hills precipitant. No foe
Is found to ſtop the torrent; on they roll
With thund'ring footſteps o'er the ſounding paſs.
THAT night no ſooner had the Theban train
Thermopylæ forſaken, but their courſe
They bent along the mountains, till they met
The pow'rs of Xerxes. Duſky twilight ſtill
Prevailing, Perſia with miſguided rage
Aſſail'd her friends unknown. Th' impetuous ſpear
Of Hyperanthes clove the faithleſs heart
Of Anaxander; on, the hero preſs'd,
And ſpread deſtruction through their bleeding ranks;
Nor check'd his ardent valour, till he heard
The name of Thebes in ſuppliant cries proclaim'd:
The Perſians then receive them, in the front
As guides they place them, and, amaz'd to learn,
That daring Greece ſhould Xerxes' camp invade,
Haſte from the mountains, ruſh along the paſs,
And now tumultuous iſſue from its mouth.

At once Laconia's leader gives the ſign,
When, as th' impulſive ram with dreadful ſway
O'erturns the nodding rampart from its baſe,
And ſtrews a town with ruin, ſo the band
Of ſerried heroes down the Malian ſteep,
An hideous depth, the blended numbers ſwept
Of Thebes and Perſia. There no water flow,
But horrid rocks preſent their craggy ſides;
There daſh'd whole legions. From their mangled limbs
A tide of blood rolls foaming to the ſea.
Again thy voice, Leonidas, is heard;
The Grecians turn; againſt the op'ning paſs
They point their wheeling phalanx; on they ruſh
Aſtoniſh'd Perſia ſtops in full career,
Ev'n Hyperanthes ſtarts with terrour back.
Confuſion drives freſh numbers from the ſhore,
Whelm'd in the Malian ſlime. The undaunted king
Of Lacedæmon enter'd now the ſtraits,
And rang'd for battle. Hyperanthes ſoon
Recall'd his choſen warriours from their feet.
Swift on the great Leonidas was bent
A grove of darts; th' incount'ring armies clos'd.
WHOM firſt, whom laſt, great Spartan, didſt thou ſoil?
What rivers heard along their echoing banks

Thy

Thy name in curſes ſounded from the lips
Of mothers wailing for their ſlaughter'd ſons!
What towns with empty monuments were fill'd
For thoſe, whom thy unconquerable ſword
This day to vultures caſt! Firſt Beſſus died,
A haughty ſatrap, whoſe tyrannic hand
Deſpoil'd Hyrcania of her golden ſheaves,
And laid her foreſts waſte. For him the bees
Among the branches interwove their ſweets;
For him the fig was ripen'd, and the vine
With rich profuſion o'er the goblet foam'd.
Then Dinis bled. On Hermus' ſide he reign'd,
And long had fought with unavailing love
Great Artemiſia fam'd in Xerxes' fleet,
The martial queen of Caria. She diſdain'd
The lover's ſoft complaint; her dauntleſs ear
Was taught to mark the tempeſt, while it rag'd;
Her ſight was practis'd from the rolling deck
To brave the chafing billows; doom'd to meet
That day of horrour, when the weeping eye
Of Xerxes ſaw the blood of nations flow,
And to its bottom tinge the briny floods
Of Salamis, whence ſhe with Aſia fled,
She only not inglorious: low reclines

Her lover now, on Hermus' banks no more
To ſound her name, nor tell the vocal groves
His fruitleſs ſorrows. Then Madauces fell,
A Paphlagonian born amid the ſound
Of daſhing ſurges, and the roar of winds;
Who o'er th' unhoſpitable Euxine waves
Was wont from high Carambis' cliff to watch
Th' ill-fated bark, which cut the Pontic ſtream,
Then with his dire aſſociates through the deep
For ſpoil and ſlaughter guide his hoſtile prow.
With theſe Tithrauſtes far from Medus fall'n,
His native tide, with blooming ſtrength indu'd,
And manly grace, Lilæus, who had left
The balmy fragrance of Arabia's fields,
And Babylonian Tenagon expir'd.
His braveſt friends on ev'ry ſide o'erthrown
With indignation Hyperanthes view'd,
And in fierce haſte his dauntleſs arm oppos'd
To Sparta's hero. Each his lance protends,
But thouſands ruſh with interpoſing ſhields,
Such ſacred lives all anxious to defend;
Or thither Fortune urg'd the tide of war,
Their term protracting for augmented fame.
So, when two gallies lab'ring through the foam

Preſent for battle their deſtructive beaks,
The billows oft, by hurricanes impell'd,
With mountainous commotion daſh between,
And either bark in black'ning tempeſts veil'd
Waft from its diſtant foe. But fiercer burn'd
Thy ardour, mighty Spartan, while in blood
Thy falchion rag'd unwearied. Now the ſteeds
Of day were climbing their meridian ſteep,
And o'er the Perſian camp the ſhouts of war
Burſt from Thermopylæ. Pharnuchus heard,
Who from his couch beyond the Malian plain,
Rous'd by the tumult in the neighb'ring tents
To aid his lord had left Theſſalia's fields
With Syria, Cholchis, and Armenia's bands,
Th' Aſſyrians, and Chaldæans. Aſia's camp
Was ſtill the ſeat of terrour and deſpair.
As in ſome fruitful clime, which late hath known
The rage of winds and floods, when now the ſtorm
Is heard no longer and the deluge fled,
Still o'er the waſted region Nature mourns
In melancholy ſilence, through the grove
With proſtrate glories lie the ſtately oak
And elm uprooted, while the plains are ſpread
With fragments ſwept from villages o'erthrown,

And round the paſtures flocks and herds are caſt
In weltring heaps of death; ſo Perſia's hoſt
In horrour mute one boundleſs ſcene diſplays
Of deſolation: half devour'd by fire
Its tall pavilions, and its warlike cars
Hide all the field with ruin; here in gore
Its princes lie, and nameleſs thouſands there,
Here legions bleeding by the Grecian ſteel,
There Perſians ſlain by Perſians ſtill declare
The wild confuſion of the direful night,
When wanting ſignals, and their leaders care
They ruſh'd to mutual ſlaughter. Xerxes' tent
On its exalted ſummit, when the dawn
Firſt ſtreaks the glowing sky, was wont to bear
The golden form of Mithra, clos'd between
Two lucid cryſtals, to the Barb'rous hoſt
An awful ſignal all in arms to leave
Their crouded tents, and numberleſs to wait
Their monarch's preſence; this Pharnuchus rears
High on the proud pavilion: at the ſight
Their conſternation is at length diſpell'd,
And through th' aſſembling nations hope revives.
Pharnuchus then from all the number forms
A choſen train; Thermopylæ he ſeeks;

Their

Their march in loudeſt clamours is proclaimed.
His phalanx ſoon Leonidas commands
To circle backward from the Malian ſhore:
Their order changes; now half-orb'd they ſtand
By Oeta's mountains guarded from behind
With either flank united to the rock.
As, by th'excelling architect diſpos'd
To ſhield ſome haven, a ſtupendous mole
Fram'd of the grove and quarry's mingled ſtrength
In ocean's boſom penetrates afar;
There ſtands the pride of art againſt the weight
Of ſeas, unmov'd, and breaks the whelming ſurge:
So, when Pharnuchus with innum'rous powr's
Thermopylæ had fill'd, th' unyielding Greeks
Oppos'd the hoſtile deluge, and its rage,
Unſhaken ſtem'd. Amid the foremoſt rank
Leonidas his dreadful ſtation held.
Before him ſoon an horrid void is ſeen
Through Perſia's legions, and the proud remains
Of nobleſt chiefs th'inſanguin'd rock beſtrew.
Pharnuchus glowing with revenge and wrath
Diſcharges full at Lacedæmon's chief
His iron-ſtudded mace. Aſide it glanc'd,
Turn'd by the maſſy ſhield, and prone to earth

The Perſian fell. Alcander to the rock
Transfix'd the proſtrate ſatrap through the reins,
Himſelf receiving in th' unguarded ſide
The lance of Hyperanthes. Low he lies,
The only Theban, who by Sparta's king
Abode intrepid, and to Greece preſerv'd
His faith untainted; a phyſician ſage,
Who from Cithæron each benignant herb
Was wont to gather, and expatiate o'er
The Heliconian paſtures, where no plant
Of poiſon ſprings, but ſuch, whoſe healing juice
Expels the venom from the viper's tooth
Fill'd with the ſweetneſs of the ſoil divine:
Him all, who languiſh on the bed of pain,
Him moſt, the wretch, whom want, and ſickneſs ſpreads
On earth's cold breaſt neglected, ſhall deplore.
On him the brave Artontes ſinks in death,
Renown'd through wide Bithynia now no more
The clam'rous rites of Cybele to ſhare,
While Echo murmurs through the hollow caves
Of Berecynthian Dindymus. The hand
Of Alpheus ſent him to the ſhades of night,
E're from the dead he diſingag'd his ſpear,
Huge Abradates glorying in his ſtrength,

Surpaſſing

Surpaſſing all of Ciſſian race, advanc'd
To grapple with the victor; near him now
His foremoſt ſtep the Perſian plants, his hand
Graſps at the Spartan's ſhoulder. Alpheus once
At Nemea's games the wreſtlers crown obtain'd.
His art he ſummons, and his rapid foot
Obliquely ſtrikes againſt the Perſian's heel;
He falling ſeiz'd on Alpheus' neck, and drag'd
His foe upon him. Streight an hundred darts
Of thronging Perſia cleave the Grecian's back.
To Abradates' breaſt the weapons pierce,
And rivet both in death. This Maron ſaw,
And Polydorus, who with victims fall'n
Before their vengeance hide their brother's corſe.
At length the gen'rous blood of Maron warms
The lance of Hyperanthes. On the ſpear
Of Polydorus falls the pond'rous ax
Of Sacian Mardus; from the yielding wood
The ſteely point is ſever'd. Undiſmay'd
The Spartan ſtoops to rear the knotted mace
Of ſlain Pharnuchus; but thy fatal ſword,
Abrocomes, that dreadful inſtant marks
To rend his op'ning ſide, unconquer'd ſtill,
Swift he diſcharges on the Sacian's front

An horrid wound, that reach'd the burſting brain.
Down his own limbs the while a torrent flows
Of vital crimſon; ſmiling he ſurveys
His ſorrows ending, and his Spartan name
Renew it's luſtre. Sudden to his ſide
Springs Dithyrambus; through th' uplifted arm
Of Mindus pointing his impetuous dart
Againſt the bleeding Spartan he im pells
His ſteel reſiſtleſs. Polydorus now
Stretch'd his cold hand to Theſpia's friendly chief,
Then bow'd his head in everlaſting peace;
And Mindus waſted by his flowing wound
Beſide him faints and dies. In Ninus old
Had his exalted anceſtors ſuſtain'd
Th' Aſſyrian ſcepter. Now to Perſia's throne
A tributary lord he rul'd the vales,
Where Tigris ſwift between the parted hills
Of tall Niphàtes draws its foaming tide,
Impregnating the glebe. At once a croud
Of ardent Perſians ſeize the conqu'ror's lance:
An hundred arms infold it. Theſpia's youth
With one ſtrong hand maintains the ſtruggling ſpear,
The other bares his falchion. Through his foes
With lightning wing'd it ſcatters wounds and death.

Artàphrenes

Artaphrenes in torture feels his arm
Lopt from the ſhoulder. Zatis leaves his hand
Yet twining round the long-diſputed lance.
On Pheron's neck deſcends the pond'rous blade;
Down drops the ſever'd head; the vital ſtream,
Spouts from its purple ſluices. Mardon ſtrides
Acroſs the pointed aſh. His weight o'ercomes
The wearied Grecian, who reſigns his hold,
Yet cleaves th' exulting Perſian to the brain.
But now the fierce Abrocomes approach'd,
And louring ſhakes his dart. The wary Greek
With his broad buckler intercepts the ſtroke,
And cloſes with the Perſian. Then what aid
Of mortal force, or interpoſing heav'n
Preſerv'd the eaſtern warriour? Lo! the friend
Of Teribazus eager to avenge
His lov'd companion, and at once to guard
A brother's life, beneath the ſinewy arm
That inſtant rais'd for ſlaughter plung'd his lance
In Dithyrambus' ſide. The vital ſtrings
At once relax; nor Fame, nor Greece demand
More from his valour, and ſupine he lies
In glories ripen'd on his blooming head.
Him ſhall the Theſpian virgins in their ſongs

Record

Record one loveliest of the youthful train,
The good, the gentle, generous, and brave;
Now fall'n his country's grace, and parent's pride:
So sinks the cedar, which in verdant bloom
High on the top of Libanus had stood
The mountain's boast, and glory of the grove;
Then to adorn the mansions of the great,
Or dignify some God's high-vaulted fane
Uprooted low'rs its heav'n-aspiring head.
Diomedon bursts forward. Round his friend
He heaps destruction. What a troop of ghosts
Attend thy shade, fall'n hero! Long unmatch'd
Prevail'd his vengeful arm, and Persia bled;
Till four Assyrians on his shelving lance,
E're yet extracted from a prostrate corse,
Their pond'rous maces all discharge. It broke.
Yet with the truncheon of his shatter'd spear
The Greek sustains the contest. Through his eye
The shiver'd fragment penetrates the brain
Of one bold warriour; there the splintry wood
Infix'd remains: the hero then unsheaths
His falchion broad; a second views aghast
His entrails falling, while Platæa's chief
From the gash'd belly draws his reeking sword:

Prone

Prone ſinks a third beneath the falchion's weight;
Though with the furious ſtroke the yielding blade
Flew from the hilt, and left the Greek diſarm'd:
The fourth that inſtant lifts his knotted mace;
It falls reſiſtleſs on the batter'd helm,
And low the great Diomedon extends
His mighty limbs. So weaken'd by the force
Of ſome tremendous engine, which the hand
Of Mars impels, a ſtately turret ſpreads
Its diſuniting ramparts on the plain;
Joy fills th' aſſailants, while the battle's tide
Whelms o'er the widening breach. The Perſians thus
O'er the late-fear'd Diomedon had ruſh'd,
And ſwept the Greeks before them; when behold
Leonidas! At once their ardour froze.
He had a while within the orb retir'd,
Oppreſs'd by labour. Now with ſtrength reſtor'd
He pours freſh ruin from the Spartan front.
As, long retarded by th' unmoving calm,
Soon, as a riſing gale freſh-breathing curls
The ſurging main, again the veſſel bounds
With all her op'ning ſails; the hero thus
His buckler huge, and formidable ſpear
Advancing, through the Aſian files renews

His courſe of ſlaughter. Deſtiny compells
The bold Hydarnes to th' unequal fight,
Who proudly vaunting left his weeping bride
To mourn his abſence on the diſtant verge
Of Bactrian Ochus. Victory in vain
He parting promis'd. Wanton hope no more
Round his cold heart deluſive ſports, nor paints
Th' imagin'd pomp of triumphs, gorgeous ſpoils,
And trains of ſhackled Greeks. The Spartan pierc'd
His ſhield, and burſting corſelet. From the ſlain
The victor draws his iron-pointed ſpear
Bent, and infeebled with the forceful blow.
Meantime within his buckler's verge, unſeen
Amphiſtreus ſtealing in th' unguarded flank
His poniard ſtruck. With ſwift effuſion guſh'd
A crimſon torrent, but the ſcaly mail
Immediate death repell'd. Th' indignant king
Gripes with reſiſtleſs might the Perſian's throat,
And drags him proſtrate. None in Xerxes' court
Was more corrupt, with inſolence more baſe,
With rancour more fallacious. Phrygia pin'd
Beneath th' oppreſſion of his ruthleſs ſway.
Was there a field once fruitful, or a town
Once populous and rich? The horrid change

To

To want and deſolation there declar'd,
The curs'd Amphiſtreus govern'd. As the ſpear
Of Tyrian Cadmus riveted to earth
The pois'nous dragon, whoſe infectious breath
Had blaſted half Bœotia; ſo the chief
Of Lacedæmon trampling on the neck
Of fall'n Amphiſtreus fixes to the rock
The gaſping tyrant, and his broken lance
Leaves in the panting corſe. Meanwhile thy wound
Inceſſant flows, great hero, and augments
The hopes of Perſia. Thou unyielding ſtill
Suſtain'ſt the conteſt, while unnumber'd darts
Are ſhiver'd on thy buckler, and thy feet
With glitt'ring points beſtrew; the Cholchian ſword,
And Perſian dagger leave their ſhatter'd hilts;
Bent is the Caſpian ſcymetar; in vain
The Sacian wheels his falchion, and their mace
The ſtrong Chaldæans and Aſſyrians raiſe:
Thou ſtand'ſt unſhaken, like a Thracian hill,
Like Rhodopé, or Hæmus; where in vain
The thund'rer plants his livid bolt, in vain
The glancing lightning cleaves th' incruſted ſnow,
And Winter beating with eternal war
Shakes from his dreary wings diſcordant ſtorms,
Chill ſleet, and clatt'ring hail. But now advanc'd

Abrocomes

Abrocomes, and aim'd his deadly ſpear
Againſt the forehead of Laconia's chief,
Not unperceiv'd; the Spartan's active hand
His ſword oppoſing upward rears the blade
Againſt the threatning javelin; o'er his creſt
Its fury waſtes in air, while ſwift deſcends
The pond'rous falchion on the Perſian's knee:
At once the bone is ſever'd; prone he falls;
Cruſh'd on the ground beneath ten thouſand feet
The gallant warriour breaths the laſt remains
Of tortur'd life. The Spartan thus maintain'd
Th' unequal combat with his ſingle ſword.
But Agis calls Diéneces, alarms
Demophilus, Megiſtias; they from heaps
Of Allarodian and Saſperian ſlain
Haſte to their leader, and before him raiſe
The brazen bulwark of their maſſy ſhields.
The foremoſt line of Aſia ſtands and bleeds;
The reſt recoil: but Hyperanthes ſtrides
From rank to rank throughout his various hoſt,
Their dying hopes rekindles, in the brave
Excites new valour, and the freezing heart
Of Fear revives. Aſtaſpes firſt obey'd
The hero's voice, a fierce Chaldæan lord
Vain of his birth from antient Belus drawn,

Proud

Proud of his wealthy ſtores, and ſtately domes;
But now more proud by conqueſt, ſince his might
Had foil'd the ſtrong Diomedon. He ſeeks
The front of battle. His victorious mace
Againſt the brave Diéneces he bends;
The weighty blow bore down th' oppoſing ſhield,
And cruſh'd the Spartan's ſhoulder: idle hangs
The buckler now, and loads th' inactive arm
Depriv'd of all its functions. Agis bares
His vengeful blade, and ſevers from the foe
His hand exalted for a ſecond ſtroke.
The dying fingers with convulſive graſp
The falling mace infold. A Sacian chief
Springs on the victor. Iäxartes' banks
To this brave ſavage gave his name and birth.
His looks erect, and fierce deportment ſpoke
A bold and gallant ſpirit, but untam'd,
With dreary wilds familiar, and a race
Of rude Barbarians horrid as their clime.
The hoſtile ſpear, againſt his forehead aim'd,
Glanc'd upward, and o'erturn'd his iron cone:
The blow renew'd his burſting cheſt divides.
Th' undaunted Sacian writhes along the lance,
Which griding paſſes through his breaſt and back,
A barbed arrow from his quiver draws,

Deep

Deep in the ſtreaming pap of Agis hides
The deadly ſteel, then grimly ſmiles and dies.
From him Fate haſtens to a nobler prey;
For lo! the brave Diéneces preſents
His breaſt obnoxious to a thouſand darts.
The ſhield deſerts his unſuſtaining arm,
And ſlides to earth. A grove of javelins roſe
On his broad boſom. Still for e'vry wound
He hurl'd a Perſian to th' infernal gloom;
But life at length forſook his riven heart,
And o'er the rock the gaſping hero ſtretch'd
His dying limbs in gore. Who now can ſtand
The torrent of Barbarians? Agis bleeds,
His ſpear is irrecoverably plung'd
In Iäxartes' body. Low reclines
Diéneces in gore. The Spartan chief
Himſelf o'erlabour'd of his lance diſarm'd
The rage of Death can exerciſe no more.
One laſt and glorious effort age performs.
Demophilus, Megiſtias join their might,
And ſtem the floods of conqueſt; while the ſpear
Of ſlain Dièneces to Sparta's king
The fainting Agis bore. The blazing ſteel
In that dire hand again for battle rear'd
Blaſts all the Perſian valour. Back in heaps

They

They roll confounded, by their leader's voice
In vain exhorted longer to endure
The ceaſeleſs waſte of that unconquer'd arm.
So, when the giants from Olympus chas'd
Th' inferiour Gods, themſelves in terrour ſhun'd
Th' inceſſant ſtreams of lightning, when the hand
Of heav'ns great father with eternal might
Suſtain'd the direful conflict. O'er the field
Awhile Bellona ſtills the rage of war;
When Theſpia's leader, and Megiſtias drop
At either ſide of Lacedæmon's king.
Beneath the weight of years and labour bend
The hoary warriours. Not a groan moleſts
Their parting ſpirits, but in death's calm night,
All-ſilent, bows each venerable head:
Like aged oaks, whoſe deep deſcending roots
Had pierc'd reſiſtleſs through the mountain's ſide,
And there for three long centuries had brav'd
Each angry guſt of Eurus, and the North;
Till, ſapleſs now by Time's deſpoiling hand,
Without a blaſt their moſſy trunks recline
Before their parent hill. By Sparta's chief
None now remains but Agis, who implores
The laſt kind office from his godlike friend,
The Sacian's arrow from his pap to draw.
This done, life iſſues with the ſanguine tide.

Thy

Thy comely features, Agis, now are pale;
Cold are thy graceful limbs, and dim thy eyes,
Which now no more with placid beams reveal
The native virtues of thy gentle breaſt.
The noble corſe Leonidas ſurveys.
Fate yields him one ſhort interval of peace
To know how lovely are the patriot's wounds,
And ſee thoſe honours grace the man, he lov'd.
But Hyperanthes with his ſingle ſpear
Forth from the trembling ranks of Aſia tow'rs
His country's glory to redeem, or fall.
The Spartan worn by toil his languid arm
Once more uplifting waits the dauntleſs prince.
The heroes now ſtood adverſe. Each a while
Reſtrain'd his valour, and his godlike foe
Admiring view'd. Such majeſty and ſtrength
To fierce Pelides all incircled round
With Trojan dead; and ſuch to Priam's ſon
By ſtruggling virtue, and by manly ſhame
From flight rceall'd, great Homer's fancy gave.
O thou exalted o'er the laurel'd train
High, as the ſweet Calliope is thron'd
Above each virgin of the tuneful hill;
Now let one beam of thy celeſtial light
Dart through my lab'ring mind; leſt Freedom mourn

Her choſen ſon diſhonour'd in theſe ſtrains!
Now Hyperanthes, and Laconia's king
With brandiſh'd points, and targets high uprear'd
Commence the fatal combat, which muſt cloſe
The long-continu'd horrours of the day.
Fix'd with amaze and fear, the Aſian files
Unmov'd and ſilent on their bucklers pauſe.
Thus o'er th' expanſe of India's wilds contend
The elephant, and horn'd rhinoceros;
Earth groans beneath them, as with wrath untam'd
Each hideous bulk in dire encounter meets:
With diſtant terrour gaze the ſavage throng.
Prolong'd by varied art, the dubious fight
The great event ſuſpended. On the foe
His well-aim'd ſpear at laſt the Spartan drove,
And pierc'd the ſhield. Inexorable fate
That moment hover'd o'er the eaſtern prince,
When with unmatch'd celerity aſide
He ſwung his buckler; underneath his arm,
Unſtain'd with blood the hoſtile javelin paſs'd:
Meantime, with joy, and ardent hopes elate
Of fame and conqueſt, ſudden he impell'd
His rapid lance againſt the Spartan's throat;
But he with wary ſkill his target rais'd,

And

And o'er his ſhoulder turn'd the glancing ſteel;
For one laſt effort then his ſcatter'd ſtrength
Recall'd, and wheeling with reſiſtleſs force
His maſſy buckler daſh'd the brazen verge
Againſt the Perſian's forehead: down he ſunk
Without a groan expiring, as o'erwhelm'd
Beneath a marble fragment from its ſeat
Heav'd by a whirlwind ſweeping o'er the ridge
Of ſome aſpiring manſion. Gen'rous prince!
What could his valour more? His ſingle might
He match'd with great Leonidas, and fell
Before his native bands. The Spartan chief
Now ſtands alone. In heaps his ſlaughter'd friends
All ſtretch'd around him lie. The diſtant foes
Show'r on his head innumerable darts.
From various ſluices guſh the vital floods,
And ſtain his fainting limbs. Nor yet with pain
His brow is clouded, but thoſe beauteous wounds,
The ſacred pledges of his own renown,
And Sparta's ſafety, with ſereneſt joy
His cloſing eye contemplates. Fame can twine
No brighter laurels round his glorious head,
His virtue more to labour Fate forbids,
And lays him now in honourable reſt
To ſeal his country's liberty in death.

End of the Ninth and Laſt Book.

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